THE Atlantic

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2004

BLIND INTO BAGHDAD

SPIES, LIES, AND WEAPONS: WHAT WENT WRONG

BY KENNETH M. POLLACK

HOW POST-WAR PLANNING BIT THE DUST

BY JAMES FALLOWS

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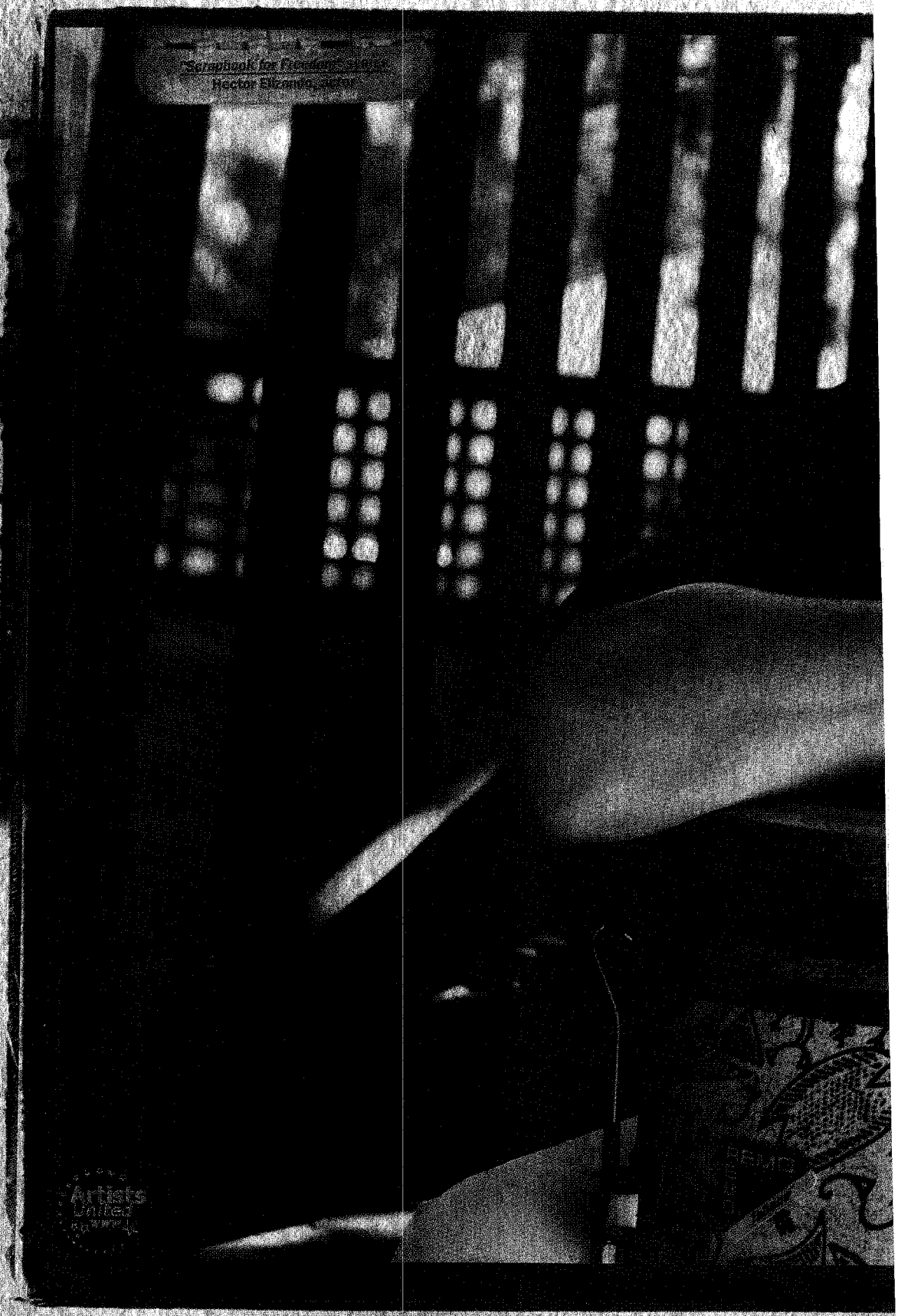

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1 Lillian Hellman, from testimony before

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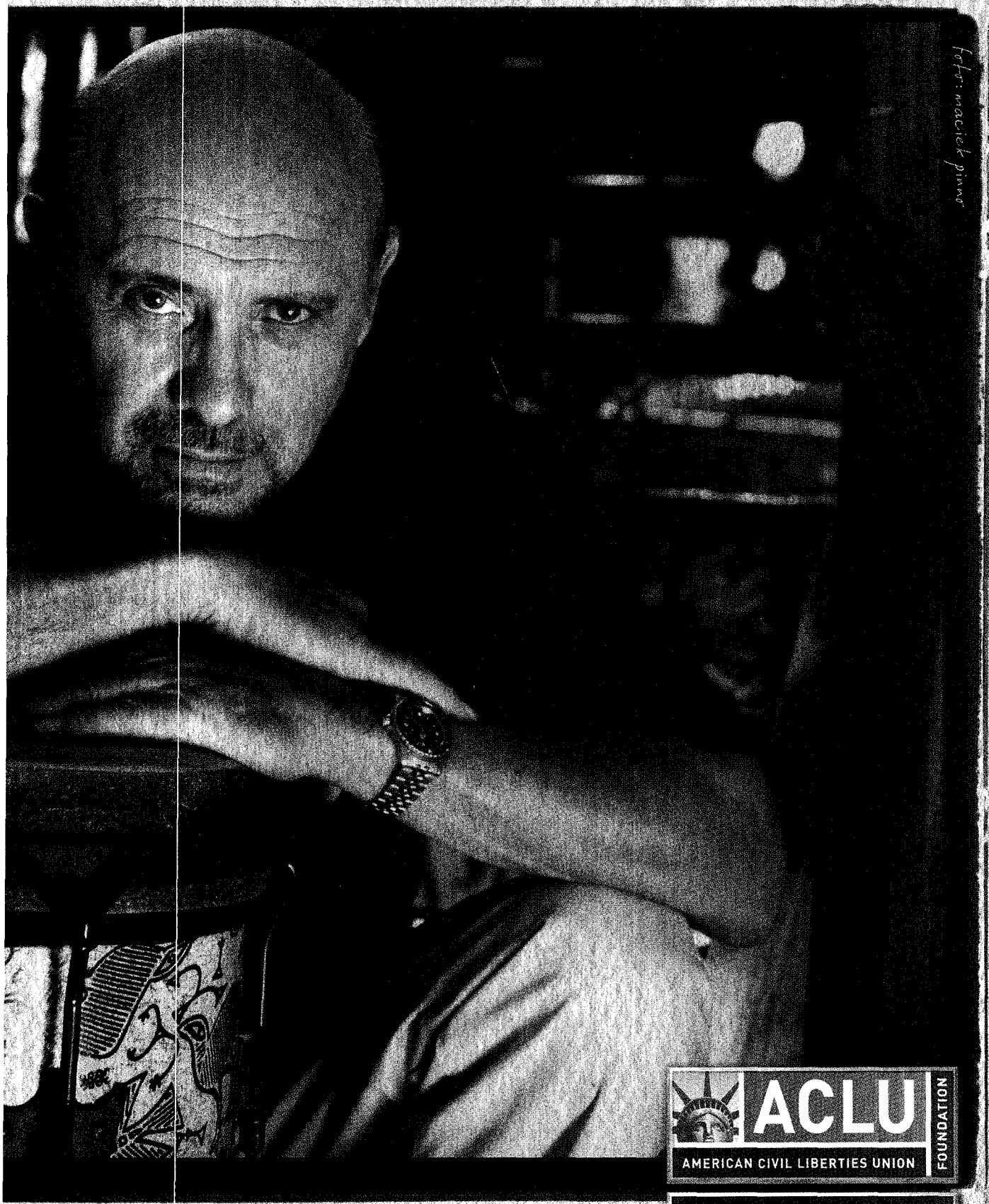

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THE Atlantic

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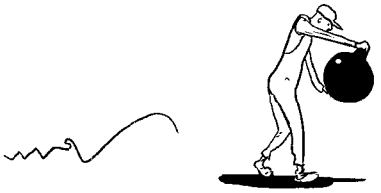

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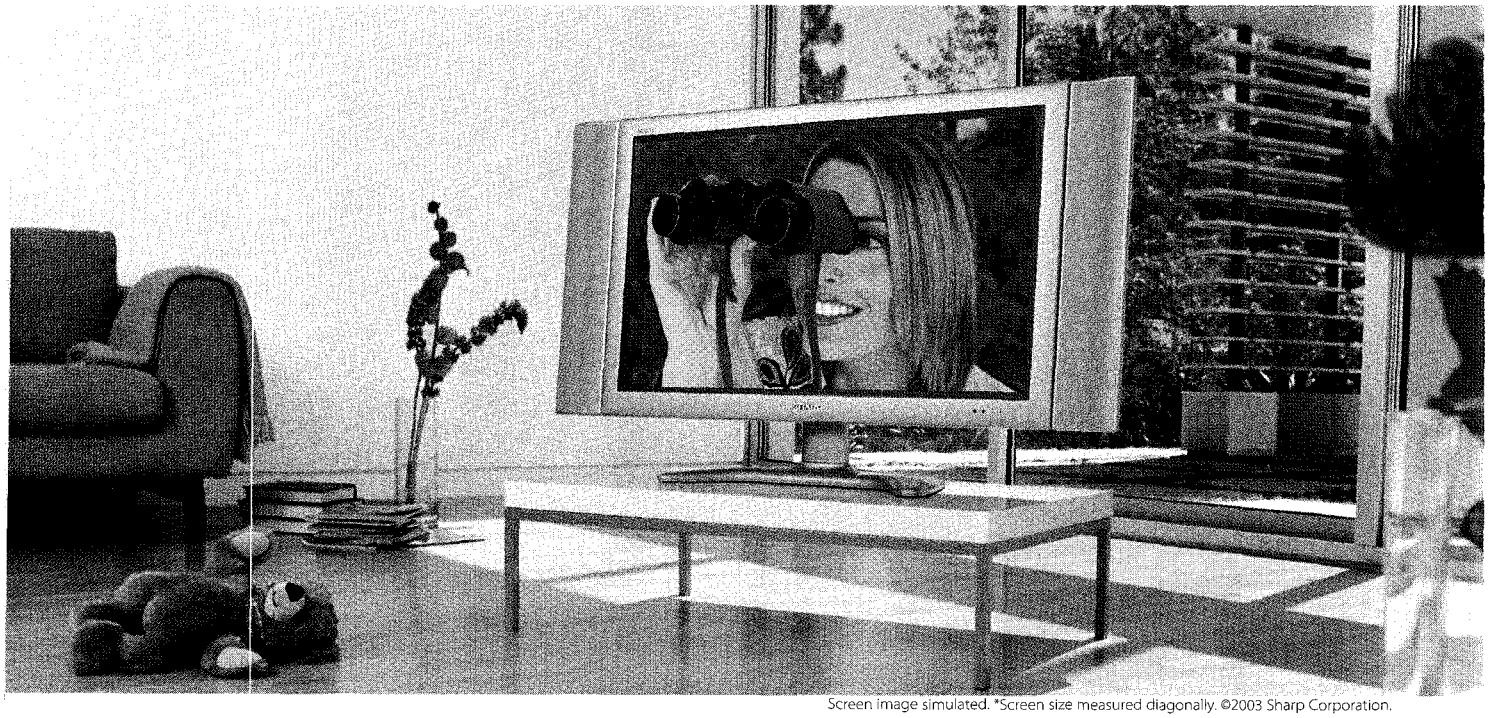

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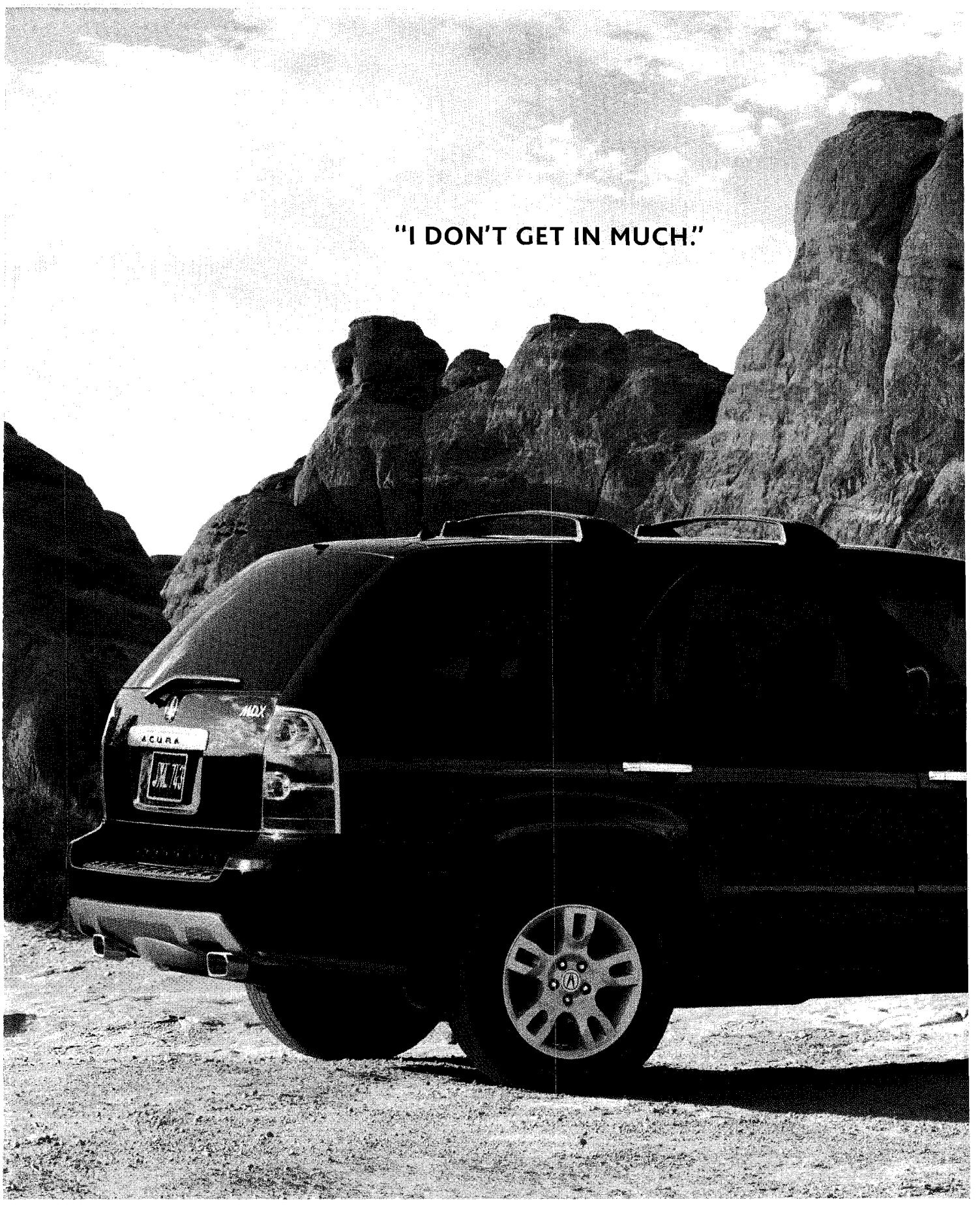

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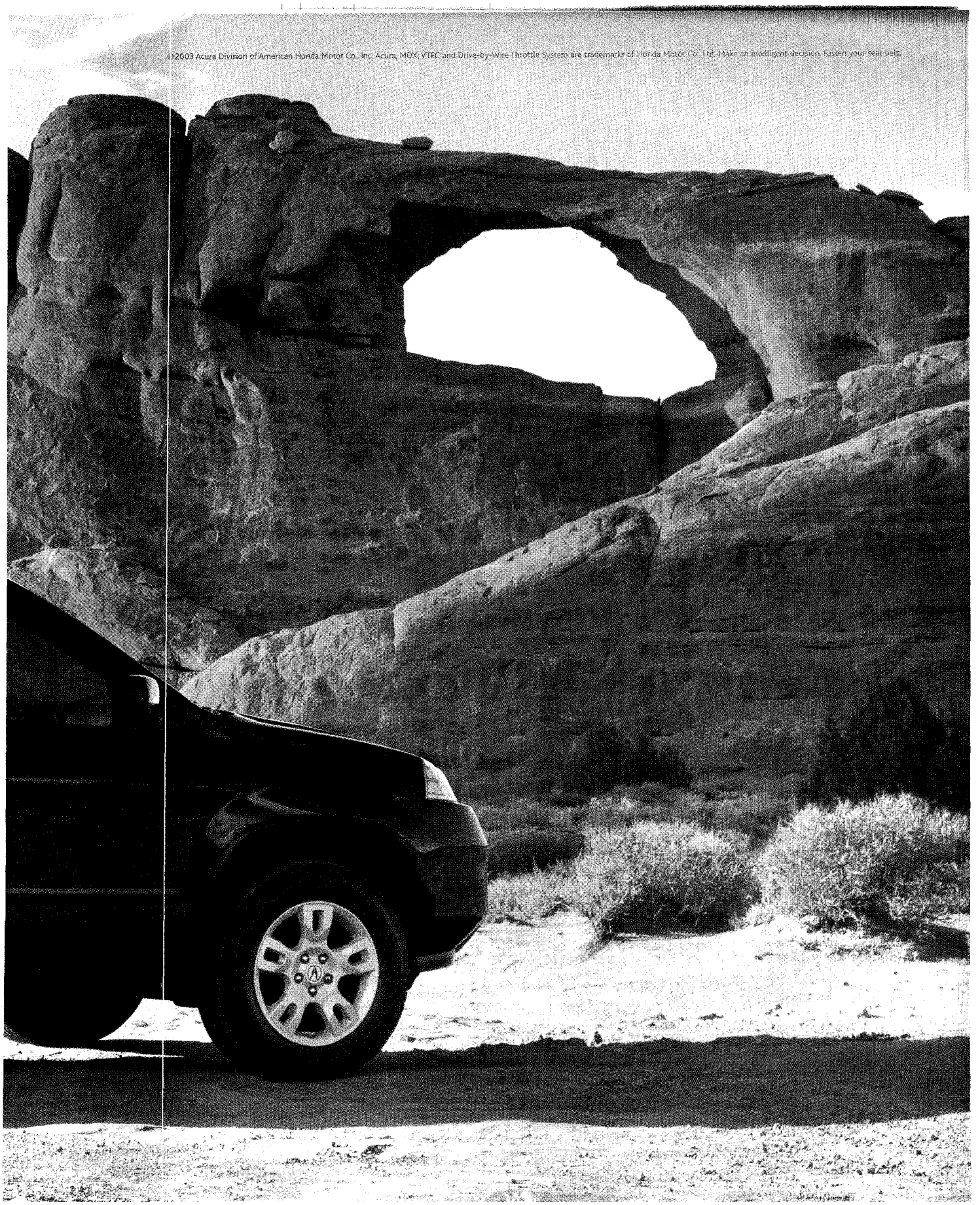

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This month on the Web . . .

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State of the Union Address: An Annotated Version James Fallows, an *Atlantic* national correspondent and a former presidential speechwriter, will give his take on the President's speech.

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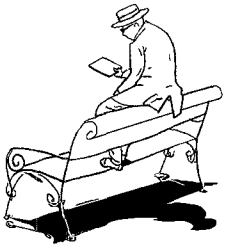

Letters to the Editor

Columbia's Last Flight

"*Columbia*'s Last Flight" (November *Atlantic*) contains much useful information about the tragic accident that took the lives of our heroic *Columbia* astronauts and the subsequent investigation by the *Columbia* Accident Investigation Board. Our nation indeed owes the board and its leader, Admiral Hal Gehman, a debt of gratitude for clearly pinpointing the combination of technical, human, and process errors within NASA that led to the tragedy—errors we are committed to correcting.

I am concerned, however, that William Langewiesche's account presents an incomplete and often inaccurate view of NASA's response to the investigation.

From February 1 onward we took concrete actions to ensure that the accident investigation would be independent, thorough, and credible, no matter how bad the agency or people within it might look. Early on I modified the board's charter to give the panel more authority and the people it needed. I also modified the charter to ensure that the board's report would be issued at the same time to the White House, Congress, NASA, and the public. I never attempted, as Langewiesche asserts, to keep the report from being made available to the public. Further, throughout the board's work NASA willingly provided technical assistance to investigators and responded positively to every request we received for information or action—nearly 800 in all. This was not the behavior of an agency unwilling to face the truth.

Following the release of the board's report, on August 26, as promised, we have embraced the board's findings and its recommendations as our starting point for returning to safe shuttle-flight operations. Our return-to-flight plan lists specific actions that NASA will take to fully implement each of the board's safety recommendations, and additional actions we will take to raise the safety bar higher. A copy of the board's report and our return-to-flight plan can be found on the NASA Web site at www.nasa.gov. (Our Web site also details the important scientific research conducted by *Columbia*'s astronauts. Viewed objectively, this information contradicts Langewiesche's assertion that no useful science took place on the STS-107 mission.)

In the aftermath of *Columbia*, NASA is taking other steps to develop an organizational culture that empowers open dialogue and rewards excellence in all aspects of our work. In November we opened a new Engineering and Safety Center that will draw on our best engineering and scientific talent to take a no-holds-barred approach to analyzing and acting on all safety aspects of our missions. We've also empowered a distinguished return-to-flight task group, led by the former astronauts Thomas Stafford and Richard Covey, to carefully evaluate and publicly report on our progress in implementing the board's recommendations.

I am disturbed by Langewiesche's assertion that no one at NASA "stepped forward to accept personal responsibility for contributing to this accident," "certainly not Sean O'Keefe." Following the accident I expressed my deep sense of personal responsibility and accountability for this horrible event. In a March session with reporters I said, "First and foremost, the responsibility begins with me for what happened on that day and everything leading up to it." I've repeated that and will continue to act in that manner every day of my tenure at NASA.

Sean O'Keefe
National Aeronautics and Space Administration
Washington, D.C.

William Langewiesche's portrayal of the *Columbia*'s doomed flight is chilling and no doubt largely accurate as far as it goes. But his article fails to acknowledge or discuss the years of funding shortfalls and personnel reductions, as dictated by Congress and the Office of Management and Budget, that severely eroded the environment of safety that must surround the space-shuttle program if catastrophes like the loss of *Columbia* are to be avoided.

I served as a member of and a consultant to NASA's Aerospace Safety Advisory Panel from 1980 to 2001. The ASAP is a congressionally mandated advisory group established in the aftermath of the *Apollo* fire in 1967. Its task is to advise the NASA administrator and Congress on "the hazards of proposed operations ... with respect to the adequacy of proposed or existing safety standards." For many years we monitored the development and operations of the space-shuttle program as our priority concern. Each year, and more frequently if conditions warranted, we reported in writing and in person to the administrator, and occasionally to Congress, on a wide range of safety issues affecting the space shuttle. Most of our time was spent at NASA field centers talking to managers, engineers, contractors, and technicians about what was really going on. We spent as little time as possible at NASA headquarters watching view-graphs or PowerPoint presentations.

Since its earliest flight the space shuttle has been an R&D vehicle, despite sporadic attempts by NASA and the OMB to declare it "operational." The distinction is more than semantic. The space shuttle is the most complex machine ever conceived, built, and flown by humankind. This complexity means that utmost care must be expended at every stage of its operations and on every flight to avoid glitches and errors that in many

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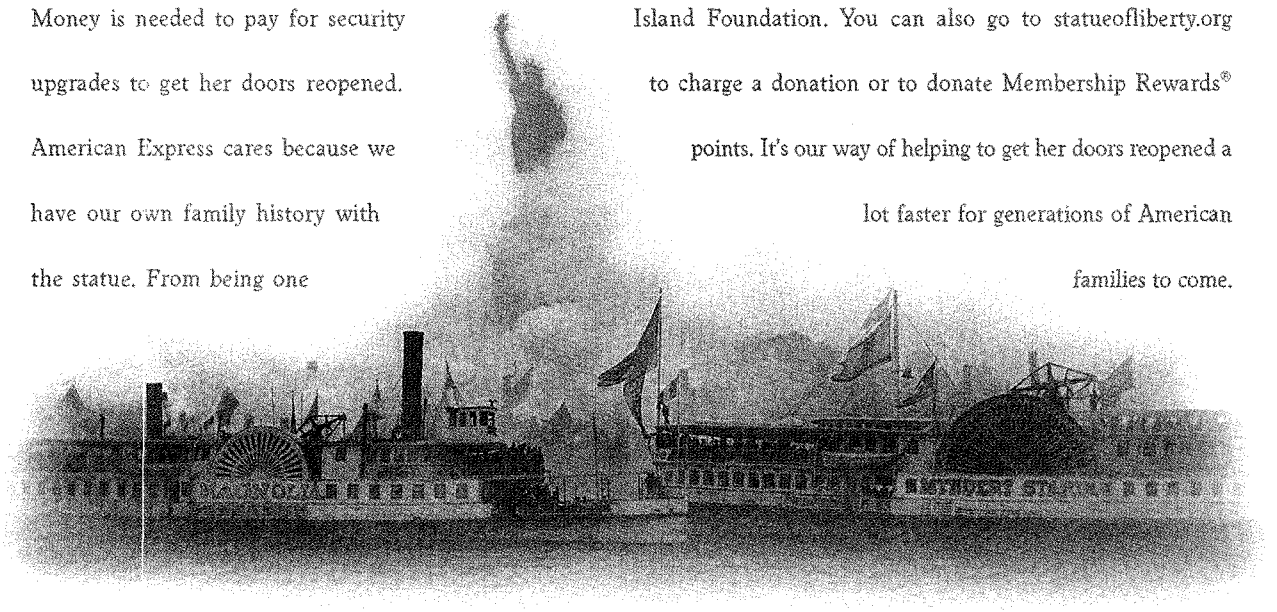

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cases could cause catastrophic loss of the vehicle and its crew. It must never be seen as "operational" in the sense that a Boeing 747 is operational. Above all, as the ASAP repeated over and over, "Safety first, schedule second" must be the space shuttle's operating mantra.

Beginning in the mid-1990s, in response to budget pressures emanating from the OMB (that is, the White House) and sustained on Capitol Hill, the resources—dollars and people—needed to operate this R&D vehicle safely were whittled away. Unrealistic and potentially disastrous personnel reductions were imposed on the space-shuttle organization, field centers (especially Johnson Space Center, Kennedy Space Center, and Marshall Space Flight Center), and NASA contractors (especially the United Space Alliance). Toward the latter part of the decade and continuing into 2000, 2001, and 2002, approximately $300 million was shifted each year from the space-shuttle account to the floundering International Space Station project.

Thousands of experienced managers, engineers, and technicians were given pink slips or early retirement. Although any bureaucracy can usually make do with fewer people, these cuts went far beyond reasonable downsizing. Engineers who carried unique knowledge of the space-shuttle operating systems in their heads (each vehicle has its own peculiarities) were shown the door. In performing their highly complex and critical functions, technicians used to rely on a second set of eyes provided by NASA quality-control personnel; but many quality-control workers were eliminated in the layoffs. The technicians were given sole responsibility for making sure that many jobs were done correctly.

In its 1997 annual report the ASAP warned that "further erosion of the personnel base could affect safety and increase flight risk because it increases the likelihood that essential work steps might be omitted." The panel expressed similar concerns over the need to restore NASA's aging infrastructure at the Kennedy Space Center.

In 2001 the ASAP's annual report noted that the panel's safety concerns had "never been greater":

> Budget cutbacks and shifts in priorities have severely limited the resources available to the Space Shuttle and ISS for application to risk-reduction and life-extension efforts. As a result, funds originally intended for long-term safety-related activities have been used for operations ... The Panel has significant concern with this growing backlog because identified safety improvements are being delayed or eliminated.

It was in this resource-constrained environment that the decisions of NASA's space-shuttle managers must be seen. There appeared to be safety issues far more urgent than the loss of foam from the external tank. I have no reason to doubt that the space-shuttle program manager, Ron Dittemore, would gladly have authorized an updated alternative to the Crater model used to analyze the likely effect of foam strikes on the underside protective tiles. But with limited funds and people to invest in risk-reduction studies, the money went to more immediate needs. With limited analytical capabilities, the foam strikes came to be seen as annoyances rather than the life-threatening events they in fact turned out to be.

In retrospect, the NASA administrator Sean O'Keefe's determination to bring the ISS to initial completion no later than February of 2004 served to turn the ASAP's "Safety first, schedule second" on its head. The pressure was on to maintain space-shuttle flights in support of ISS construction. In this environment, and taking into account the resource cutbacks that had been occurring for at least five years, there existed little latitude for space-shuttle managers to investigate any but the most obvious safety concerns.

None of this absolves NASA or its managers from the catastrophic mistakes identified by the *Columbia* Accident Investigation Board and recounted in Langewiesche's insightful reporting. NASA's management culture must achieve fundamental change. But it does suggest some additional culprits: namely, the OMB and Congress. These institutions created the environment in which safety took a back seat to schedule, and needed risk-reduction initiatives were forgone. And these institutions have now run for cover, more than willing to let NASA

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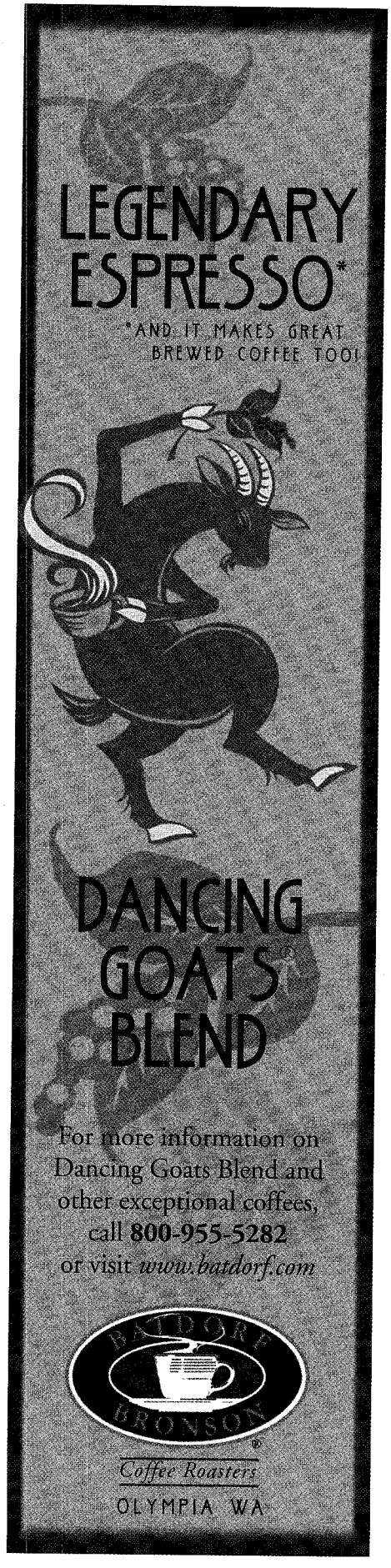

take full blame for the tragic events that unfolded over the western United States on February 1.

John G. Stewart
Aerospace Safety Advisory Panel, 1980–2001
National Aeronautics and Space Administration
Knoxville, Tenn.

William Langewiesche is dead wrong when he states as "fact" that allowing witnesses to be protected in *Columbia* Accident Investigation Board interviews was "arguably [Admiral] Gehman's biggest mistake," that many believed this wouldn't have an effect on what people said, or that people would have been willing to speak without privacy. As one who conducted a third of all the interviews, I saw firsthand that we gained invaluable information—information we likely would not have gained if the comments had been open to public scrutiny. Indeed, not unlike reporters protecting their sources, we had people offering testimony under privilege that could have cost them their jobs if made public. Such testimony, particularly when validated through multiple interviews, went on to help us piece together the dysfunctional communications within NASA, the organizational incongruities that had evolved, and even concerns about what the next accident cause could be—the next *Challenger* O-ring or *Columbia* bipod ramp.

As a board member, I also had the privilege of meeting with congressional leaders to discuss our investigation. When pressed to explain why we were doing privileged interviews (often the first question I was asked), I responded by giving examples of interviews in which witnesses put their jobs on the line with their responses. No further questions were asked.

Duane W. Deal
Brigadier General, USAF
Colorado Springs, Colo.

"*Columbia*'s Last Flight" took as a given what should have been a major issue—the long-standing tendency of thermal-insulation foam to separate from the external tank and hit the shuttle (which it had seriously damaged, although not with fatal results, earlier). William Langewiesche has no doubt that the foam caused this disaster, but why does he not ask the obvious question: Why did NASA make no effort to cure this problem?

Here is the real scandal—not, as Langewiesche would have it, bureaucratic mismanagement within NASA. The customary insulation was foam made from Freon, which was banned by the Environmental Protection Agency to comply with the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer. As the *Waterbury Republican-American* of July 14, 2003, reported, in 1997 the maiden flight with the new foam had resulted in a big increase in foam-induced tile damage. This should have been a wake-up call for NASA engineers.

Surely Langewiesche should have addressed this issue—and he could have mentioned as well that many call the theory that chlorofluorocarbons (of which Freon is one) produce a thinning of the ozone layer junk science, and believe that the thinning is a natural, recurring, temporary phenomenon related to the wintertime decrease of sunshine, which interacts with chemicals to produce ozone.

Rael Jean Isaac
Irvington, N.Y.

According to William Langewiesche, some of the blame for the *Columbia* tragedy was put on NASA's reliance on PowerPoint presentations. It should be realized that this much-maligned Microsoft application is only as good as the message developed by the user. As an analyst, I can vouch for the effectiveness of PowerPoint. I fear that naive users of this software erroneously think that the medium is the message. To rely on this approach is to revert to the custom of blaming bad news on the messenger.

Philip Shiffman
Matawan, N.J.

I was surprised by William Langewiesche's description of Linda Ham. He writes that she was a "youngish, attractive woman given to wearing revealing clothes."

The *Columbia* flight did not end in tragedy because some engineer, rather

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than minding the computer readouts, was busy looking down Ham's blouse. I fail to understand why her dress code was included. One can make the point that she was a successful professional woman in a male-dominated industry without reference to fashion tastes. Ham committed egregious errors in management decision-making. To comment on what she was wearing when she made those errors detracts from the very real thrust of the article: seven people died because the organization charged with protecting them had an abysmal failure of communication at all levels.

Lori McKay
Highland, Md.

In reading William Langewiesche's fascinating and moving piece on the *Columbia*, I was startled to see the phrase "the smell of space." Space smells? Where does the odor originate?

Lisa Heller
Salem, Ore.

William Langewiesche replies:
The "smell of space" exists. It has an acrid or burned quality. But neither I nor the astronauts I've asked yet understand its origin.

College Admissions

As a college admissions officer and an *Atlantic* subscriber, I read the *Atlantic* survey in your November issue partly out of necessity but also out of curiosity, to see if you might offer a new approach to this vexing set of issues. I was hopeful that the survey would provide some useful and balanced insight into the complexities of contemporary college admissions. I am afraid I was disappointed on all counts.

I found your "experiment(al)" ranking list simplistic and hypocritical. Frankly, *U.S. News* does a better job by at least trying to measure many different institutional characteristics that have something to do with learning beyond admissions statistics. Ranking colleges solely on the basis of admissions statistics—ignoring the quality of the actual educational experience after a student has enrolled—encourages the ever increasing tendency to equate selectivity with quality. If, as you state, "a school's selectivity does not necessarily reflect the quality of the education it offers," why do you produce a ranking based solely on such statistics? Your "experiment" (perhaps it is intended as a parody?) is a disservice, because inevitably many students and families will give credence to the ranking.

Your survey was also incredibly narrow, skewed, and insular. The various sections relied almost exclusively on the views of admissions officers at highly selective colleges or teachers and counselors at elite private schools in the Northeast—precisely the populations among which admissions hysteria is most often manifested. Your reporters, and James Fallows in particular, should be aware of the need for balanced reporting. There are other regions of the country beyond the Northeast, where there are just as many talented prospective students but the mania over admissions is not nearly as pronounced.

Finally, your articles fail to capture the tremendous effort that most colleges and universities make to ensure that their selection processes are as fair and equitable as possible. The demographics of the national high school population are changing in a dramatic fashion. Dartmouth and many other colleges and universities are working earnestly on these issues in an effort to expand opportunity and create vibrant and diverse educational communities. Your survey failed to capture this central reality of today's admissions world. It serves only to heighten the paranoia of those who already feel entitled to attend the college of their choice.

Karl Furstenberg
Dean of Admissions and Financial Aid
Dartmouth College
Hanover, N.H.

The rankings in "The Selectivity Illusion," by Don Peck, are computed using a flawed metric, and mistakenly have Caltech at No. 3 instead of No. 1.

The rate of admission (fraction of applicants admitted relative to those who apply) understates the selectivity of small technical schools like Caltech. Applicants to Caltech undergo very strong self-screening, since the criteria for admission are largely quantitative, and only 300 or 400 students are admitted each year to fill a class of 200. (This makes Caltech only about a fifth the size of its close rivals in the rankings: MIT, the big-three Ivies, and Stanford.)

Self-screening accounts for the fact that Caltech's 20 percent admission rate is higher than those of the other top five schools. Many high school seniors will take a shot at getting into schools like Stanford and Harvard (and, increasingly, MIT), leading to a lower admission rate. Very few would try this at Caltech, where even elite freshmen are often unable to keep up with the required coursework, which includes two years of advanced mathematics and physics (even quantum mechanics) for all students. (The course requirements are much more rigorous at Caltech than at MIT, and consequently its retention/graduation rate is lower than those of the other top five schools, which hurts it in the *U.S. News* rankings.)

A look at SAT scores in your ranking shows a statistically very significant difference between Caltech and less selective schools. The 75th-percentile number is not very useful, since the top 25 percent of Caltech students all scored close to 1600 (as is the case at one or two of the other top five schools), but the 25th-percentile number is very revealing, because it shows a large gap between Caltech and the other top five schools.

As someone who has either graduated from or been on the faculty of Caltech, Berkeley, Harvard, and Yale, I can assure you that only a small fraction of students at the other top five schools in your rankings could manage to graduate from Caltech, even if admitted.

Stephen Hsu
Eugene, Ore.

I was surprised to see that the University of Michigan was not on your list of most selective schools. Michigan's Web site shows that the university had about 25,000 applicants in 2002. Twelve thousand were actually accepted. Of these, about 5,000 enrolled as freshmen. Ninety-seven percent of the freshman class had a GPA of 3.0 or higher. The

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2002 SAT 25th percentile shows a combined score of 1180, and the 2002 SAT 75th percentile shows a combined score of 1380. Don't these statistics show that Michigan is more selective than some of the schools listed in your ranking? Thirteen thousand applicants were denied admission to Michigan. How many of the schools you listed even had 13,000 applicants?

James Stegenga
Kentwood, Mich.

Don Peck refers to the "Little Ivies" as Swarthmore, Amherst, and Williams. Actually, the Little (Three) Ivies, as they have been known since the official founding of the Ivy League, in 1954, are Amherst, Williams, and Wesleyan. (The Ivy League was first referred to as such in 1937, by the sportswriter Caswell Adams, of the *New York Herald Tribune*.) Swarthmore, with its solid Quaker underpinnings, is altogether of another ilk originally.

Donald De Bona
Asheville, N.C.

James Fallows and Don Peck reply:
Karl Furstenberg's reaction is typical of those we received from admissions officials who had read a New York Times *story claiming that* The Atlantic *would be offering a new* U.S. News*–style college-ranking system. It is highly atypical of the reaction we received from the same people after they actually saw the issue. The magazine's intent was to explain the real function of the admissions system—"the subtle, subjective work of matching millions of students with thousands of schools"—and to contrast that with the trophy-hunt mentality that creates what Mr. Furstenberg calls "paranoia." In analyzing the preoccupation of many students and their parents—especially but not only in the Northeast—with admission to a handful of schools, we were hardly endorsing it; that is why one of our articles called it a "national hysteria." As the introduction to this section said, "In higher education, as in dating or marriage, individual tastes and needs differ. There are widely agreed-upon ideas of more and less attractive partners, but there is no single 'best' or 'right' choice. If one matchup doesn't work, many others are available. There are plenty of fish in the sea." For the record, most of the many college admissions officers that we interviewed in the course of our research were from schools outside the Northeast.*

We agree completely with Mr. Furstenberg that most colleges and universities work very hard to make their admissions process as fair and humane as possible, and to create vibrant and diverse classes. Thanks largely to such efforts, the vast majority of students enjoy their college experiences, whether or not they end up attending their first-choice schools.

Stephen Hsu and James Stegenga are correct: if we measured "selectivity" differently (and there are many ways to do so), the "ranking" we produced would change. It's a pity they don't go further and say that any attempt to make meaningful judgments about schools based on where they sit on such a list—or whether they're even on the list—is foolish. That was the whole point of the article "The Selectivity Illusion," to which our brief ranking was attached in order to stimulate comment.

Donald De Bona is right: the schools traditionally described as the "Little Ivies" are Amherst, Williams, and Wesleyan.

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Frankenfood

The short answer to the question asked by Jonathan Rauch's article "Will Frankenfood Save the Planet?" (October *Atlantic*) is, of course, no. Genetically modifying agricultural crops is a tool—and a potentially dangerous tool. Like any dangerous tool, it should be used carefully, and only when a safer tool won't do the job as well. But the Sierra Club has not called and does not call for banning the biotechnology. We call for testing it and ensuring that the benefits exceed the risks in a publicly accountable fashion.

Rauch seems to object that the Sierra Club has said we should stop growing—and eating—the present, inadequately tested varieties of genetically modified corn, soybeans, and potatoes. He says this would mean that "countless tons of polluted runoff and eroded topsoil would accumulate in Virginia rivers and streams while debaters debated and researchers researched."

Would it? Rauch admits that no-till farming can be done without biotech, but says that it is "more difficult and expensive." But maybe a little more expense would be a prudent insurance policy while we let the researchers actually do the research on these varieties. Many non-biotech crops tolerate Roundup, in moderate doses, quite nicely. Why not grow those along the Chesapeake for a few years? What's happening instead is that we are overusing Roundup Ready soybeans. Roundup-resistant weed strains are already emerging. We have no idea what we are doing to our health or the environment for these short-term fixes. We aren't investing in diverse agricultural strategies: crop rotation, conventionally bred varieties, integrated pest management, and, yes, further research into biotech crops that meet the urgent needs that Monsanto always talks about but never invests much in—such as salt-resistant barley for the coastal regions of North Africa.

Carl Pope
Executive Director, Sierra Club
San Francisco, Calif.

"Will Frankenfood Save the Planet?" is a mixture of half-truths, distortions, and outright misinformation.

The author extols no-till agriculture as preserving soil biota and hence soil fertility (mostly true), but makes the patently absurd claim that no-till must depend on herbicide use (false) and that herbicide use also requires genetically engineered (GE) herbicide-tolerant crops (also false). Herbicides damage the same soil biota we are to preserve, and weaken even transgenic Roundup Ready crops, making them more susceptible to insects and diseases; low-lying, nitrogen-fixing non-GE cover crops—called green manures—and mulches do a much better all-around no-till job, without chemicals or genetically modified organisms.

Genetically engineered "Bt" cotton, which contains its own pesticide, has largely failed to control pests and is plagued by yield loss owing to mysterious "boll drop," as shown by Andrew Gutierrez, of the University of California, the world's foremost expert on cotton

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agro-ecosystems. GE Bt corn is an economic disaster for American farmers, who have lost perhaps $92 million over the past six years in higher seed costs that have not been compensated for by yield or pest-control advantages. In fact, already existing technological options offer better ways than GE crops to implement no-till and manage pests and weeds, and give higher potential productivity increases. Yet Jonathan Rauch seems to take the word of a pesticide-biotech company like Monsanto at face value, while ignoring mounting evidence that GE crops are ecologically and economically detrimental, and that there are better ways to achieve the same ends.

None of this even touches on the real truth that hunger is caused not by our inability to grow enough food but, rather, by poverty and inequality. Global overproduction is in fact the leading cause of rural poverty and hunger. GE crops would hardly help, even if they were a better way to grow more food in harmony with the environment—which they demonstrably are not.

Peter Rosset
Anuradha Mittal
Raj Patel
Institute for Food and Development Policy (Food First)
Oakland, Calif.

The argument Jonathan Rauch makes for the environmental benefits of genetically engineered foods is interesting, but it doesn't address two larger questions: In a country of subsidized farming and surplus food supplies, does the United States really need more food? And, on a global scale, do we need more genetically engineered crops such as corn and soybeans, which are suitable only for temperate climates?

The United States is overburdened with corn, wheat, and soybeans—coincidentally the most genetically engineered crops on the market. If anything, we need to reduce the excess food this country produces, or find a better system for distributing food to parts of the world that need it.

As for feeding the planet, wheat and corn are bumper crops only for temperate regions. Agribusinesses have little motivation to develop biotech crops for parts of Africa and Asia, because there is little economic gain for these companies. It is not likely that big business will develop suitable crops for developing countries out of good will.

Christine Cyr
Seattle, Wash.

Jonathan Rauch replies:
No-till (that is, ploughless) farming is indeed possible without using genetically engineered crops, as Carl Pope and Peter Rosset, Anuradha Mittal, and Raj Patel write—and as I said in my article. Biotech, however, makes the technique simpler, cheaper, and more effective, which is why no-till and biotech have advanced in tandem. "It's like the difference between using a paintbrush or a sprayer to paint your house," is how Dan Towery, of the Conservation Technology Information Center, puts it. In any case, no-till farming without biotech would require the use of more kinds of herbicides that are less environmentally benign. Why would environmentalists favor that?

"I did not say that," Andrew Gutierrez, of the University of California at Berkeley, responded when I read him the views attributed to him by Rosset et al. Gutierrez has argued that Bt cotton (which is genetically modified to resist insect pests) has been used too indiscriminately—not that it doesn't work. Walt Mullins, the technical manager of Monsanto's cotton products, says he has never heard of any link between Bt cotton and boll drop. "I'll be honest with you," he told me, "I have absolutely no idea what they're talking about."

If, as Rosset et al. maintain, Bt corn has been an "economic disaster" for America's farmers, someone forgot to tell the farmers: its use rose by 50 percent (to 29 percent of all U.S. corn) from 2001 to 2003. According to Leonard Gianessi, a senior research associate with the National Center for Food and Agriculture Policy, the claim that corn farmers lost $92 million on biotech assumes unrealistically high seed costs and fails to account for cost savings from lower pesticide use. His own analysis finds that the technology puts an additional $125 million into corn farmers' pockets in a typical year. And Bt crops reduce pesticide use by millions of pounds a year. Why would environmentalists oppose that?

Christine Cyr rightly points out that agribusiness has only limited commercial incentives to develop earth-friendly biotech crops for poor countries, where the need is greatest. That is precisely why my article argued that environmentalists should use their clout and money to support and guide, rather than retard, the development of such crops.

Interrogation

Mark Bowden's article "The Dark Art of Interrogation" (October *Atlantic*) is an important survey of calculated cruelty. But when Bowden argues that the Bush Administration's position on the legality of "torture lite" (so-called "stress and duress" interrogation) is ambiguous and should be, he is wrong on both points.

Bowden correctly notes that Administration officials said for months that no detainee was being "tortured," but failed to rule out "cruel, inhumane, or degrading" treatment. Both are prohibited by the U.S. Constitution and international law. Specifically, he cites an April letter from William J. Haynes II, general counsel for the Defense Department, to Human Rights Watch, which ruled out only "torture," and says, "Haynes's choice of words was careful—and telling."

Bowden seems unaware, however, that two months later the Bush Administration cleared up this troubling ambiguity by clearly affirming the illegality of both torture and other cruel or degrading treatment. In a June letter to Senator Patrick Leahy, Haynes provided the clarity his earlier letter lacked, agreeing that under Article 16 of the Torture Convention the United States "also has an obligation to prevent other acts of cruel, inhumane, or degrading treatment." Haynes noted that when the United States approved the Torture Convention, it pledged that the "cruel, unusual and inhumane treatment or punishment prohibited by the Fifth, Eighth, and/or Fourteenth Amendments to the Constitution" would be prohibited under the Torture Convention as well. As a result, "United States policy is to treat all detainees and conduct all interrogations, wherever they may occur, in a manner consistent with this commit-

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ment." That's exactly the language that Bowden and some human-rights groups said the Bush Administration had been avoiding.

Does the Administration's pledge rule out the "torture lite" techniques Bowden describes, such as binding prisoners in painful positions and making them stand for hours on end? Yes. In the recently decided Supreme Court case *Hope* v. *Pelzer*, the Bush Administration successfully argued that handcuffing an Alabama prisoner to a "hitching post" in the hot sun was so obviously cruel and inhumane that the prison guards must have known it violated the Constitution. Interrogators, take note: cruel and inhumane treatment of this kind is clearly illegal, no matter what the reason. The Bush Administration says so, to its credit, and the Supreme Court agrees.

Stephen Rickard
Director, Nuremberg Legacy Project
Washington, D.C.

Mark Bowden does a good job of discussing torture and "coercion" within the real-life context of protecting the public from violent crime, terrorism, and other evils that human beings unfortunately perpetrate on one another. The public is not well served, however, by absolutist statements regarding the use of force in interrogation. Clearly, the use of force may be justified in some contexts, and the real challenge is to keep ourselves from sliding down the slippery slope toward sadism and abuse. However, Bowden is playing with semantics when he refers to mental torture and moderate physical pressure as "coercion."

I have heard some former political detainees (in the Philippines under Ferdinand Marcos) speak of their experience of torture, and they all said the same thing: The physical aspect of the torture (including severe beating, suffocation, and electrocution), hazardous to their physical survival though it was, did not leave a permanent mark in their lives. The memory of that pain eventually started to fade as their scars, bruises, and bones healed. However, the mental and emotional torture perpetrated by their military interrogators (using some of the very methods described by Bowden in his article) was, psychologically speaking, so severe that they still struggle with it even after all these years. One man told me that if he had to go through it all again, he would prefer to experience severe physical pain.

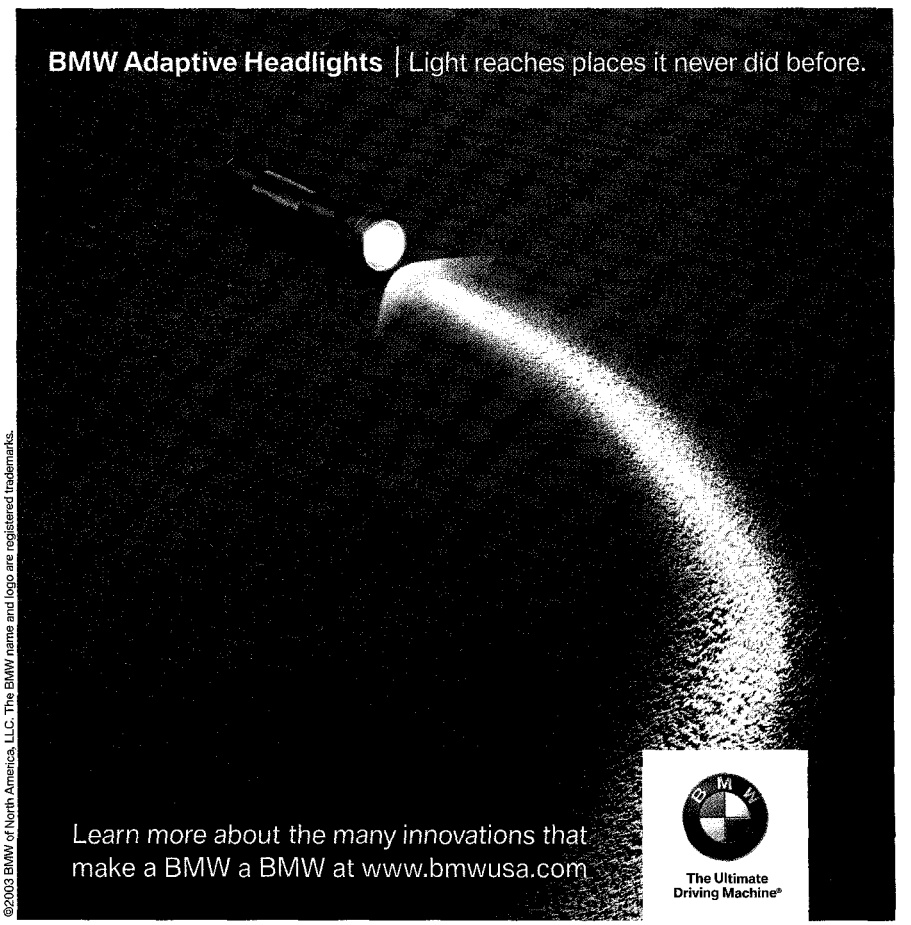
Perhaps governments are more worried about severe physical torture because it leaves more-tangible marks, preventing them from hiding or prettifying what they have done. Bowden shows us very clearly why "coercion" is much more effective than physical pain in making people talk, because it is more painful, more cruel, even though it leaves no visible scar. We already know that psychological and mental abuse cripples people for life, regardless of outside appearances. And to perpetrate such torture requires a sadistic streak that is equal to—perhaps even greater than—that of the "interrogator" who uses only his fists. There is, in fact, nothing "lite" about it.

Oona Paredes
Columbia, Mo.

Mark Bowden's "The Dark Art of Interrogation" proposes that state-sponsored "torture lite" can be justified because intelligence acquired through coercion saves lives. Even if we agree with the questionable morality of this position, we must at the very least wonder about its practicality. Bowden puts forth no hard evidence to support his assumption that torture saves lives. Rather, he relies on unverifiable government reports, fantasies of "ticking-bomb" rescues, and the boasting of professional torturers.

Is there any real evidence that more innocent lives can be saved through programs of torture than are destroyed in the process? Most likely Israeli torturers have coerced some information that has saved lives. But how many innocent families have been destroyed, and how many more terrorists have been spawned, in the process? Even if torture could be justified on a moral basis, where is the practical evidence to support it?

Ken Swensen
Pound Ridge, N.Y.



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Mark Bowden replies:

I did note in my story that President Bush had reiterated America's opposition to torture in June, and had pledged adherence to international agreements, but I was not aware of Defense Department counsel William J. Haynes II's second, more expansive letter on the subject. My thanks to Stephen Rickard for pointing it out. I don't think it substantially alters my point. The Bush Administration has promised to play by the rules with its detainees, as it should. There is also little doubt that Khalid Sheikh Mohammed and other key figures are being subjected to interrogation methods that strain those rules. Interrogators who cross those lines are potentially liable to prosecution and punishment, although the likelihood of that happening appears exceedingly remote, given the Administration's refusal to participate with the International Criminal Court and the lack of jurisdiction for U.S. law enforcement. My point was that it is right for the nation to uphold bans on torture, in order that it not become commonplace, but also right for individual interrogators to use coercive methods in those rare cases when lives can be saved. Just because words on paper say it must be so doesn't mean that in the real world it is so—or always ought to be.

I think that Oona Paredes and I agree on the need to prevent the occasional mistreatment of prisoners from becoming routine—hence the importance of banning torture. No doubt there is a chance that the methods I lumped under "coercion" might do lasting psychological damage; but in the appropriate circumstances (such as trying to find a kidnapped child who is buried alive, or to prevent an act of mass murder) the consequences of not leaning on a prisoner are far worse. If al-Qaeda can be dismantled and even one of its future attacks can be stopped, I'm willing to accept that Sheikh Mohammed may have bad dreams about his interrogation. I make no claim to moral complexity, but to me there will always be a big difference between gouging out someone's eyes and keeping him awake.

As for Ken Swensen, what can I say? I did not advocate "state-sponsored 'torture-lite.'" I specifically opposed it. I wrote that torture in all its forms (including coercion) ought to be banned. My story gave specific examples of cases in which the need to break the rules was compelling, and I would argue that any case involving a suspect with information that could further dismantle al-Qaeda (an organization that is primarily engaged in planning and carrying out acts of mass murder) falls into that category. Again, I believe that interrogators (not the state) must accept responsibility for breaking the rules. Moral courage requires accepting consequences.

Anarchy at Sea

Although I found William Langewiesche's "Anarchy at Sea" (September *Atlantic*) interesting and largely accurate, I don't agree with the comment "there is no obvious technological solution." In fact we have technological tools that can be used now without bankrupting maritime commerce. Compared with the expense that the nation's air carriers have incurred, the sums are minuscule. For years we've been able to track cars with satellite transponders. Why not ships? In fact, many responsible vessel operators are already using satellite technology to ensure that their vessels are proceeding on course and on schedule. This practice should be required for all vessels calling on U.S. ports, with the information provided to the Coast Guard and other agencies involved in maritime security. Unfortunately, the U.S. Coast Guard is loath to require that vessels trading with the United States participate in a satellite tracking system, because of the costs and the need to receive international acceptance. This requirement can be put in place for the cost of a latte a day, $3.00, and will track a vessel anywhere in the world! In most cases no special equipment is needed, because the required satellite communications equipment is already on board most major vessels engaged in international trade.

Existing international agreements require vessels to have Global Marine Distress Safety System equipment that has the satellite communications capability needed to provide long-range tracking. These agreements have been in force since 1999. I can only speculate that bureaucratic gridlock is the real reason the Coast Guard has not yet acted on this issue. Our maritime policy ought to be that any country wanting to trade with the United States should be told, "We want you to participate in our vessel-tracking system so that we know where your ships are and where they've been before they are allowed in our ports." The United States could track all 8,000 deep-draft vessels, which make some 60,000 port calls a year in our country, for about $10 million a year with no cost to the vessel operator at all. This is a fraction of the cost of the automatic identification system that the Coast Guard is building, which when completed, several years from now, will provide coverage for only about 20 percent of the waters subject to U.S. jurisdiction and will not be able to show where vessels have come from overseas.

Ed Page
Captain (Retired), U.S. Coast Guard
Juneau, Alaska

Regarding William Langewiesche's thorough examination of the underbelly of international maritime shipping: In my view, the heart of the problem lies with what has happened in world shipping over the past fifteen years. The article touches on but does not address in depth the proximate or immediate causes for disasters like that involving the *Kristal*. Langewiesche writes that the maritime registries (of flag states) are no longer dominated by strong maritime nations but, instead, are populated by "flags of convenience." The FOC states (Liberia, Malta, Panama, the Bahamas, and others) are clearly more interested in revenue generation than in creating a safe maritime environment. They have delegated and, in fact, relegated the safety of vessels under their flags (and thousands of human lives) to classification societies. The "big five" classification societies do most of the "contract" certification work for FOC states worldwide. Herein lies the rub. One of the items lacking from the author's careful factual description was the name or names of the classification societies involved with the "bottom feeder" vessel the *Kristal*.

The American Bureau of Shipping is one example of a classification society involved with ships like the *Kristal*. The ABS is nominally a private organization that has contracted with virtually all the FOC states to act in matters concerning marine safety. It is authorized by most of

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them to determine, on their behalf, compliance with various international conventions developed to increase the safety of property and life at sea and to protect the environment.

The ABS and other classification societies have been doing this work for decades, but we are no longer living in a world where strong maritime nations such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Norway, and Sweden are shipping powers watching over the seaworthiness of vessels flying their flags. None of the FOC states maintain adequate marine-safety departments; they have retained classification societies and then granted to them their own sovereign immunity from prosecution. This, in my view, is why you have outrageous casualties like the *Kristal*.

Brian D. Starer
New York, N.Y.

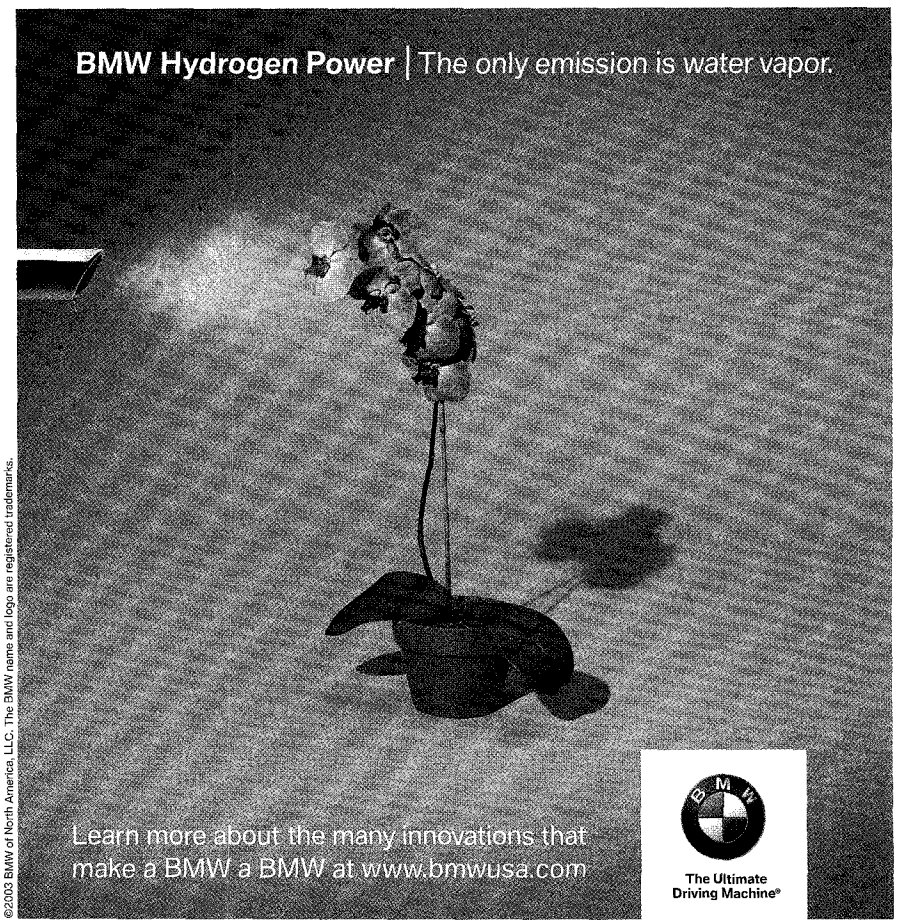
Saint Peter's Bones

Regarding Tom Mueller's article "Inside Job," in the October *Atlantic*: This summer, on a tour of the *scavi* underneath Saint Peter's, our group was treated to a picture of the skeletal reconstruction of the bones, lost and then found, of Peter, which were almost complete, excepting the feet—a reference used to demonstrate the authenticity of the bones as belonging to the crucified saint. Surprisingly enough, there was no reconstruction of the skeleton of the mouse found alongside these human remains. Nor was any explanation offered for the presence of other animal bones, a more perplexing issue. The secrecy of the excavations, and the reticence about the original discovery of no bones underneath the altar of Saint Peter's, were attributed to fear at first of German interference. Anyone who saw the traveling "Treasures of the Vatican" exhibit, which I saw in Houston in May, was treated to an even more whitewashed version of the archaeological discoveries, with only a reconstruction of the *aedicula* and copies of the inscriptions on the adjoining wall. Any difficulty in finding or identifying Peter's bones was strictly ignored.

Tom Mueller's piece does not make the point clearly enough that the current presentation by the Vatican of the archaeological excavations under Saint Peter's is unscientifically biased in favor of the pious conclusion that Saint Peter's is truly built over Peter's burial spot—as if a denial of this ancient tradition might somehow damage the credibility of the Church and the faith. Though I respect the piety of those who find spiritual comfort in the presence of Saint Peter's relics, my faith in the Church does not stand or fall on the authenticity of those bones. They might or might not be Peter's. The liturgy, the sacraments, the Scriptures, and the living faith do not depend on such a minor element. I do find disconcerting the effort to establish their authenticity beyond doubt. For a religion that holds that reason and faith are in harmony, this seeming dismissal of scientific methods of investigation and presentation is disappointing to say the least, though certainly not unexpected.

John M. Norris
Theology Department
University of Dallas
Dallas, Texas

I congratulate Tom Mueller, whose essay brought back the sights and smells of my own tour of the Vatican necropolis. I must take exception, however, to the conclusion of an otherwise well-researched article. The assertion that there were temples on the Vatican Hill left me scratching my head. Perhaps Mueller meant to say "tombs" or "mausolea"—an understandable confusion given that the term *aedicula*, "little house," could apply to a shrine as well as a tomb. And Mueller appears to have conflated the artificial lake created for naval battles—which was actually located farther east, in what is now Trastevere—with the circus that Nero completed. The Emperor Augustus built the former, supposedly on the site where the legendary hero Cincinnatus dropped his plough in answering the call to lead the army of Rome. The spectacular fights staged on the lake would have been fought by condemned prisoners, not gladiators. In the circus, meanwhile, gladiators might have provided entertainment between chariot races; but so, too, did singing rope dancers, in an act presum-



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ably something like that of the frog in the Warner Brothers cartoon—if the wire were not as high, the performer human, and the "Michigan Rag" sung in Latin or Greek.

Christopher Barnes
Department of Classics
Brooklyn College
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Tom Mueller's generally excellent article on the search for Saint Peter's tomb was marred by some serious errors concerning the accounts of Peter in the Bible. It is not true that Peter "disappears from the biblical narrative [in A.D. 44] with such finality that some scholars take the delivering angel to be a euphemism for death." The incident Mueller describes occurs in Chapter 12 of the Acts of the Apostles; Peter appears alive and well in Chapter 15, where he takes a leading role at the meeting later named the Council of Jerusalem. He also appears in the letter of Saint Paul to the Galatians, where he meets with Paul at Jerusalem and quarrels with him at Antioch. These events are dated to fourteen years after Paul's conversion—somewhere around A.D. 50, according to most scholars: six years after Peter's supposed death.

Nor is it precisely accurate to say that the New Testament makes "no reference" to Peter's martyrdom. It is true that there is no direct narrative of the event, but Mueller ignores Jesus' prophecy to Peter in John 21:18: "Truly, truly I say to you, when you were young you girded yourself and walked where you would; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish to go."

As the Evangelist comments in 21:19, "This [Jesus] said to show by what death [Peter] was to glorify God." It is hard to interpret this in any other way than as a reference to Peter's death by crucifixion.

James Kabala
Dudley, Mass.

In his preface to the Vatican report issued in 1951, Monsignor Ludwig Kaas (the former head of the German Catholic Center Party and a friend of Pius XII's) assured its readers that the excavation was conducted in accordance with the "strictest scientific principles"; yet we know that he wandered through the empty *scavi* early in the morning and late at night collecting bones and who knows what else. It's anybody's guess as to what was really found where; in this sense Tom Mueller's puzzling statement that nothing was found directly under the *aedicula* is a valid guess. I'd like to add my own: The person whose name was etched in faint marks on the famous red piece of plaster that Antonio Ferrua happened to find in the empty marble cavity behind the graffiti wall (an early example of "you've got mail") was not Peter but Proclus, in town to see for himself the *tropaion* that Gaius had written to him about in A.D. 200.

Edward Kislinger
Santa Monica, Calif.

Tom Mueller replies:

I agree with John Norris when he says that evidence exists linking Peter with Rome. Yet, as I argued in my article, the early evidence is obscure where it ought to be explicit; more-detailed evidence emerges only much later, with the rise of the martyrs' cult and the monarchical episcopate—when, that is, the presence, teaching, and relics of the Prince of the Apostles had become rich prizes.

Though Christopher Barnes is baffled by my reference to temples in the Vatican, the Phrygianum, or sacred compound of Cybele, is known from copious literary and epigraphic evidence to have stood close to Saint Peter's basilica; Biering and Von Hesberg site its central temple just a few meters south of the transept. Other sources mention a temple of Apollo nearby, and a Gaianum, which Paolo Liverani, the foremost authority on Vatican topography, explains as a sacred compound to the Greek earth goddess Gaia. Concerning the artificial lakes for mock naval battles, or naumachiae, *the fourth-century Regionary Catalogues list two in the Regio XIV where the Vatican lay, and the term recurs frequently in Vatican documents and toponymy. Though their precise location is unknown (Trastevere is only one theory), two likely sites are just west of Castel Sant'Angelo and north of Saint Peter's Square, near the former church of San Pellegrino in Naumachia. The contestants were certainly "gladiatorial" in the broader sense of "one who fought with a sword or other weapon at public shows," and not all of them were condemned prisoners—the first shows, in the time of Julius Caesar, featured soldiers.*

The "serious errors" James Kabala finds in my treatment of the biblical Peter are interpretations shared by scholars of note. My point about Acts has been argued in detail by Donald Robinson ("Where and When Did Peter Die?," Journal of Biblical Literature *64) and Warren Smaltz ("Did Peter Die in Jerusalem?," ibid 71), among others, who contend that Peter's imprisonment and subsequent disappearance "to another place" in Acts 12 signify his death. The chronology of Acts is, as the historian Robin Lane Fox has observed, "pleasantly erratic," just as the dates of meetings between Peter and Paul mentioned in Galatians remain,* pace *Kabala, far from certain. And although Jesus does prophesy Peter's imprisonment in John 21:18, his words do not necessarily imply martyrdom, much less crucifixion; the great Rudolph Bultmann argued that "stretch out your hands" indicated a forward extension of the arms (for example, as a prisoner), and specifically excluded crucifixion.*

That nothing was found underneath the aedicula *is not my "guess," as Edward Kislinger writes, but the conclusion of Antonio Ferrua's official report. And the famous inscription begins with the (Greek) letters "PET," which makes the name "Proclus" a bit of a stretch.*

Hitchens on Books

In his otherwise brilliant article "That Blessed Plot, That Enigmatic Isle" (October *Atlantic*), Christopher Hitchens calls those who believe that the seventeenth Earl of Oxford wrote the works of Shakespeare "lonely … crackpots." He thus bestows that description on Felicia Londré, the Curators' Professor of Theatre at the University of Missouri, Kansas City, and a recent president of the American Theatre and Drama Society; Sir Derek Jacobi, Britain's leading thespian; many university Ph.D.s; and a host of laypeople who have weighed the evidence and found the case for the Stratford man Will Shaksper breathtakingly bankrupt. In fact, Oxford is becoming the leading

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authorial candidate, for good reason. One can only hope that Hitchens is being facetious when he writes that Oxfordians "rest their case" on Oxford's intimate knowledge of Italy—an intimacy that is reflected in the plays. In fact there is a mountain of persuasive evidence in favor of Oxford, including the fact that *Hamlet* (which scholars have long insisted is Shakespeare's most autobiographical play—whoever the Bard was) is essentially Oxford's biography. In contrast, there is virtually no evidence whatever that the man from Stratford had anything to do with the writing of the plays. Everything we know of the man himself suggests that he was illiterate. As for being "lonely," the Oxfordian theory gains scores of new adherents every year, both within the academy and without. The largest Oxfordian conference, at Concordia University, in Portland, Oregon, grows each year and features intelligent presentations by researchers from UC Berkeley, the University of Washington, and other institutions. I hope that Hitchens will abandon an opinion that, his comments suggest, is uninformed, and will join the debate in Portland this year.

Andrew Werth
Everett, Wash.

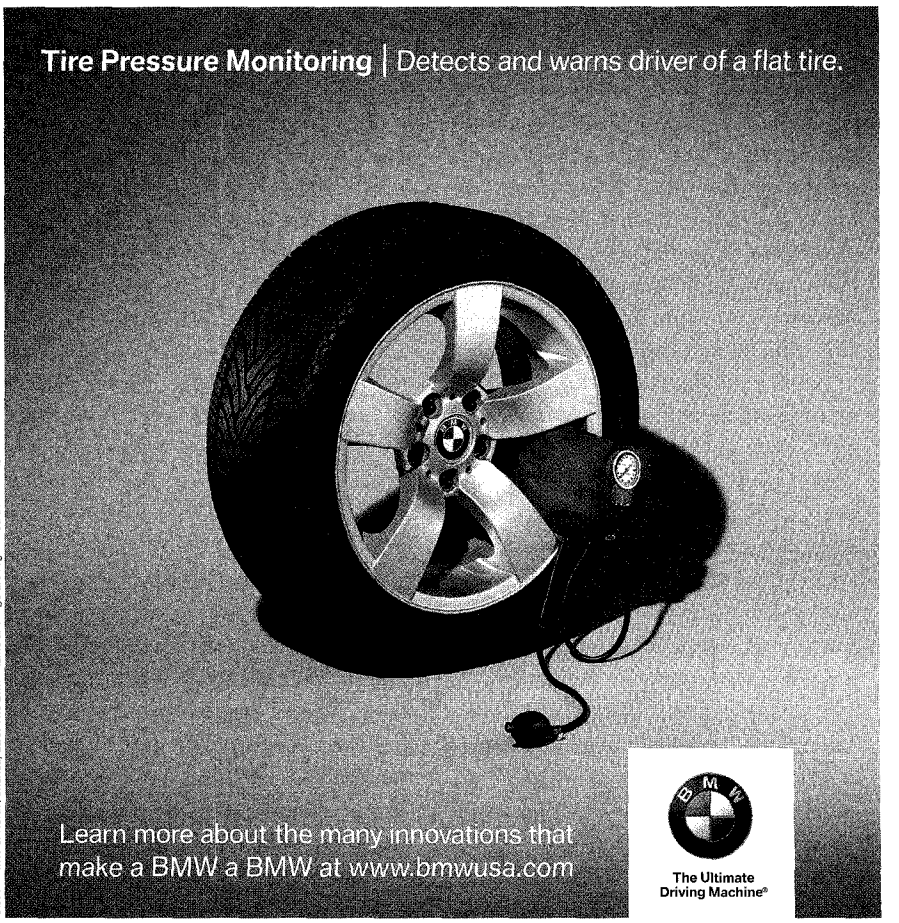
A review of my book *The Singular Mark Twain*, by Christopher Hitchens, appears in the November *Atlantic*. I've exercised sufficient discipline not to read it, but others have told me that it is a meanspirited, hostile, and ignorant review. The author and I were once friendly. But Hitchens is a Gore Vidal acolyte, even worshipper, who treasures his relationship with Vidal. He was apparently miffed when I did not think his relationship with Vidal important enough to interview him at length or to give him any sort of prominent role in my biography of Vidal. In regard to anything to do with Vidal, he certainly seemed his usual combination of fawning and aggressive. When I declined, in line with the terms of our written agreement, to allow Vidal to vet my biography of him and exert pre-publication censorship, Vidal turned on me and the book. So did Hitchens. Unfortunate, but no big deal. However, Hitchens's *Atlantic* review is apparently payback.

In the end very few people will actually take seriously a review by Hitchens of a serious and substantial literary biography. Hitchens is a political, not a literary, man, and he always has a political agenda. But there are two aspects of this that are serious. The first is that *The Atlantic* may have published this review unaware of Hitchens's relationship with me through my Vidal book. The second is that it isn't professionally acceptable to run a review a month in advance of the publication date (the November issue of *The Atlantic* probably appeared on the stands in mid-October; the book's publication date was November 21). *The Atlantic*'s pre-publication review runs the risk of appearing to be agenda-driven and an attempt to damage the book. Or is this a case of the Hitchens tail wagging an innocent *Atlantic* dog? Hitchens apparently feels that he has good reason to be hostile and to indulge his dark side, but *The Atlantic* has standards to uphold. Your reviewer's predecessors—like William Dean Howells—in the now less-than-august literary chair of *The Atlantic* would be disturbed.

Fred Kaplan
Boothbay, Maine

Christopher Hitchens replies:
I happily accept Andrew Werth's reassurance that the Oxfordians are now joyously proliferating. I have met and conversed with both Tom Bethell and Joseph Sobran, Oxfordians extraordinaire, and though I think they might not mind being termed "mavericks" or "eccentrics" (or even "right-wing Catholic oddballs"), I have no excuse for having used the opprobrious and also lazy term "lonely crackpots."

Fred Kaplan's letter would stand out in any collection of pompous letters that typically begin, "If your reviewer had troubled to notice ..." But it also belongs, as far as I know, in a class all by itself, since on his own admission Kaplan has not read my review. I myself gave up responding to bad reviews some time ago, and also to angry letters from readers, unless I was charged directly with something like racism or child abuse, or unless I was accused of outraging



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the facts: in other words, unless silence might be construed as my having nothing to say in reply. But Kaplan can have no complaint of this sort against my reading of his book, because (after allowing me to shoulder my way, with many a sigh, through all his scurvy pages) he will not deign to glance in return at what I wrote.

When a man thinks any stick will do, he tends to pick up a boomerang. Kaplan's imputation to me of questionable motives is simply risible. For one thing (and just to begin with), he and I were never "friendly"—indeed, I do not think we have ever met except briefly and in company. I was most willing to help him with his biography of Gore Vidal when he approached me, and was slightly sorry that we were never able to arrange the interview—"slightly" only because I had not played much part in Vidal's life and could have been of little assistance.

To say that I am an "acolyte, even worshipper" of Mr. Vidal is false on its face. Even when our relations were much closer, I wrote some quite critical stuff about Vidal, and in places where I know Kaplan would have been likely to see (if not, I now realize, necessarily to read) it. I did get from Vidal the nicest review/blurb I have ever received, most generously naming me as his successor or "Dauphin" or delfino, and did make haste to plaster this on the covers of my books. But after a grave but inevitable disagreement between us on both the causes and the consequences of the war against Islamic nihilism, Mr. Vidal withdrew this endorsement in a speech that was quite widely televised, and I have with regret told my publishers that future editions of my books must drop the great man's imprimatur.

Kaplan imagines himself the victim of an occult committee that is willing to degrade the standards of a nationally renowned magazine just to give him un mauvais quart d'heure. *This boast is enough on its own to make a cat laugh. I say nothing about the mad extent to which it promotes and overstates my influence: it ought to be plain to any reader that the editors of* The Atlantic *are spoiled for choice when it comes to books, and cannot hope to review them all, and have no time for vendettas against writers of the second rank. Kaplan was lucky in his choice of subject, and that's it. For him to complain further about being reviewed early is a self-promotion from mere solipsism to something more like full-blown megalomania.*

The Age of Murdoch

As a former employee of a major media company, I read James Fallows's article "The Age of Murdoch" (September *Atlantic*) with great interest. I want to shed some additional light on the FCC's recent relaxation of the national TV-station-ownership rule—one of the several media-ownership regulations Fallows uses as a backdrop in analyzing Murdoch and his empire.

Amending the national TV-ownership rule, which currently limits the proportion of U.S. households that an entity's TV stations can reach to 35 percent (as calculated by the FCC), does not reduce the number of so-called voices that any household in the United States can access, as some suggest. Raising the cap does not concentrate ownership in a local market but merely allows an entity to own a TV station in additional local markets. This has no impact on the number of distinct voices in that local market, and thus does not reduce diversity. The FCC used this logic, in part, in deciding to increase the national TV-ownership cap to 45 percent in June. (The FCC's ruling has since been enjoined, courtesy of the Third Circuit of the U.S. Appeals Court.)

It is important for diversity proponents to understand that very little of a local station's programming—its so-called voice—is truly local. Most major-network affiliates produce just four to six hours of local programs a day, 75 to 100 percent of which is local news consisting of traffic, weather, sports, and emergency incidents (police/fire). Needless to say, local news is a format that allows little room for diverse expression—the purported goal of having a variety of voices. The balance of a station's schedule outside of local news is consumed almost entirely by network and syndicated programs, regardless of market or station ownership.

The most vocal opponents to raising the national cap are those network affiliates not owned by the companies that own the broadcast-TV networks. These affiliates do not want the networks to own a larger percentage of the networks' footprints, because the affiliates believe that would give the networks more leverage to end the lucrative "affiliate compensation" payments of $100 million to $150 million that the major networks (ABC, CBS, and NBC) pay their affiliates each year. The broadcast networks have tried to unwind the outdated affiliate-comp system, created in an era before cable networks began their assault on broadcast-TV ratings. But the networks have been foiled by a concentrated affiliate group that accounts for 65 to 75 percent of each broadcast network's national reach. The affiliates fear that if the networks were to acquire more affiliated TV stations, the balance of power would shift to the networks. Eventually the networks would have enough leverage to eliminate affiliate comp, a key source of revenue and profits for many affiliated stations.

The affiliates have found serendipitous allies: the diversity crowd. The National Association of Broadcasters, a trade and lobbying group consisting mostly of affiliates, disingenuously drapes itself in the self-righteous rhetoric of diversity, public discourse, and free speech, when in fact it is pursuing economic self-interest so nakedly it would make Charles Beard blush.

Colin Campbell
Boston, Mass.

James Fallows replies:

I appreciate Colin Campbell's points. They illuminate one reason why the FCC ownership struggles of last summer were so intense and politically so strange.

In themselves many of the rule changes being debated had only modest impact. As Mr. Campbell points out, the change in the 35 percent cap would matter much more to local broadcasters than it would to most viewers. A more consequential change was the dramatic lowering of barriers to cross-ownership between newspapers and TV stations. Under the new rules, in most cities the dominant newspaper could own the dominant TV station or vice versa.

But even that change would not by itself have explained the ferocity of the discussion. For reasons I tried to explain in the article, a debate that could have been narrowly technical instead became an arena for concerns about the historic shift toward a corporatized, highly concentrated media business.

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That is also why Rupert Murdoch became an icon in this fight. He was not seriously affected by the rules being discussed, but he personified the concentrated media power that many critics feared.

Advice & Consent

I loved Cullen Murphy's September piece on unheralded inventors ("On Second Thought"), successful and failed. A category he might have included is inventors who almost, but not quite, succeeded. I remember Victor Borge's story of the beverage chemist who developed 4-Up, 5-Up, and, finally, 6-Up, but died alone and broke, never realizing how close he had come ...

Arkie Koehl
Honolulu, Hawaii

Jack Beatty's "The One-Term Tradition" (September *Atlantic*) contains a number of surprising assertions. For example, "We now know that everybody in the Administration above the rank of messenger—except the President—knew that the documents linking Saddam Hussein to an effort to obtain uranium from Niger were forgeries." So what? The President never said anything about uranium in Niger. He said British intelligence had learned that Saddam was trying to obtain it from Africa. This is quite true, and both British and American intelligence still believe that. This opinion never rested on the forged document from Niger, and Niger was never one of the primary suspects, as anyone can see who bothers to read Tony Blair's remarks on the African issue before the war.

"We know that the intelligence agencies cast doubt on Saddam's continued possession of WMD and on his supposed ties to Osama bin Laden." No, what we know is that it was the consensus of the intelligence agencies that Saddam had WMD. Beatty says "the intelligence agencies doubted" when what he means is "somebody or other in the State Department is supposed to have doubted." Nobody in the Administration ever claimed that Saddam had direct ties to Osama. There is plenty of evidence that he had some ties to al-Qaeda.

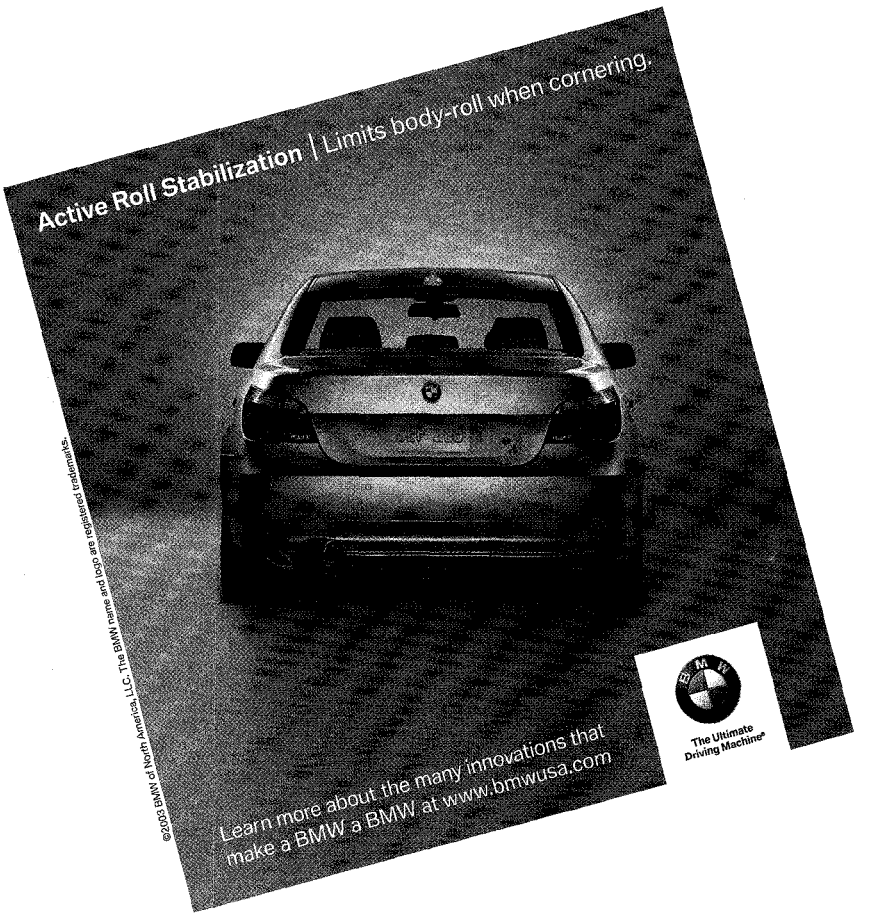
"If Bush had leveled with us" he would have said, according to Beatty, "We are pretty sure he has no current ties to al-Qaeda." That would have been a lie. The true and relevant way of putting it would have been "We are sure he has supported terrorist networks, and has some kind of relationship with al-Qaeda"—which happens to be what Bush essentially said. "We know he had nothing to do with 9/11." No one in the Administration ever said he did. Beatty thinks the President should have "leveled with us about the millennial strategy behind his war." But Bush did make it clear long before the war that the modernization and democratization of Iraq was part of his strategy. He put more emphasis on WMD because he had decided to go through the UN Security Council, all of whose resolutions against Saddam had been concerned with eliminating Saddam's WMD (whose existence the UN inspectors did not doubt).

"How do you ask a man to be the last man to die for a lie?" So far the American public does not appear to care beans about the phony issues raised by Beatty. They know Saddam had to go, that the President acted in good faith, and they attribute the so-called "scandal" to partisan smears. It might be added that to raise accusations of "lying," when what is meant is "maybe the President acted on faulty intelligence, though we can't prove even that much," is to poison the wells of public discourse in a fashion one does not expect from a journal with the reputation of *The Atlantic.*

Doyne Dawson
Professor of Asian Studies
Sejong University
Seoul, South Korea

The "primary source" of the September Agenda piece on climate change was a study funded by the oil industry that casts doubt on the mainstream view of how recent global warming, primarily caused by air pollution, compares with natural climatic changes over the past 1,000 years.

This study, headed by the Harvard astrophysicists Willie Soon and Sallie Baliunas, has been sharply criticized by



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the scientific community. The recently appointed editor in chief of the journal that published the study declared that it never should have been printed. He and two other editors have resigned over the issue, as recently described in *The Wall Street Journal* and *The New York Times*.

The most striking aspect of this study is that in evaluating temperature records derived from tree rings, corals, ice cores, and other proxies, it does not calculate global average temperatures but instead applies vague and inconsistent criteria to determine whether each location supports "unusual 20th century warming" and a "Medieval Warm Period." The many flaws in this study are described in recent issues of *Scientific American*, *New Scientist*, *Discover*, and *EOS*, a publication of the American Geophysical Union. The latter cites several quantitative studies concluding with 95 percent confidence that current temperatures for the Northern Hemisphere are higher than any in the past 1,000 years, with an unprecedented rapid rate of warming for the past few decades.

Careful scrutiny of the oil-industry study is called for, especially since it was embraced by Senate leaders and by political appointees who attempted to insert its conclusions into an EPA report after removing scientific data on global warming. The news media should actively investigate their sources and avoid being a passive conduit for flawed "studies" designed to advance the agenda of special interests.

Edward Zubek
Oregon State University
Corvallis, Ore.

In "Waterworld" (July/August *Atlantic*), Jen Joynt and Marshall Poe explain that tempering demand and expanding supply can resolve water shortages, and that in the case of rivers we can build more dams and reservoirs. Unfortunately, this will not solve the problem of the Nile.

The human populations completely dependent on the Nile will more than double by 2050. Joynt and Poe point out that today its waters are almost completely drawn off before the river reaches the Mediterranean. The population of Ethiopia, source of the Blue Nile, grew from five million in 1900 to more than 71 million today, and is projected to reach 173 million in 2050. Ethiopia's forests have all but disappeared, water scarcity is severe, and in the 1990s its government announced plans to build 110 dams on the Blue Nile. The Sudan, with the White Nile flowing through it, has 38 million people, and its projected 2050 population is 84 million. Egypt, at 72 million, is projected to reach 127 million by 2050. Collectively, these three countries are expected to grow from 181 million today to 384 million in 2050.

In response to the many people who say we just need to manage our natural resources better and population growth is not a central problem, we have here a situation where water management and more dams (many proposed Ethiopian dams would be a disaster for Egypt) will not solve the problem, which is almost purely about human population growth. In all these countries women's access to family planning is constrained in a number of ways. Competition over the waters of the Nile is not likely to be resolved by any regional water authority; more likely the growing scarcity will contribute to strife in the region, as water scarcity does elsewhere. If we were less timid about letting people, particularly women, have all possible means to achieve the number of children they want (which is always fewer than the current average), we might avoid a great deal of pain in the future around water.

Martha Campbell
University of California
Berkeley, Calif.

What a wonderful surprise when I opened the September *Atlantic*! I had just returned from a family reunion in Indiana. The short story "Mudlavia" was indeed a sentimental journey. Beautifully written. It truly caught that era to perfection.

R. Gregory-Gromeeko
Gilroy, Calif.

"Mudlavia," by Elizabeth Stuckey-French, is the best story I've read in a long time. I'd love to see more of her work in *The Atlantic Monthly*.

Angela Lehman-Rios
Richmond, Va.

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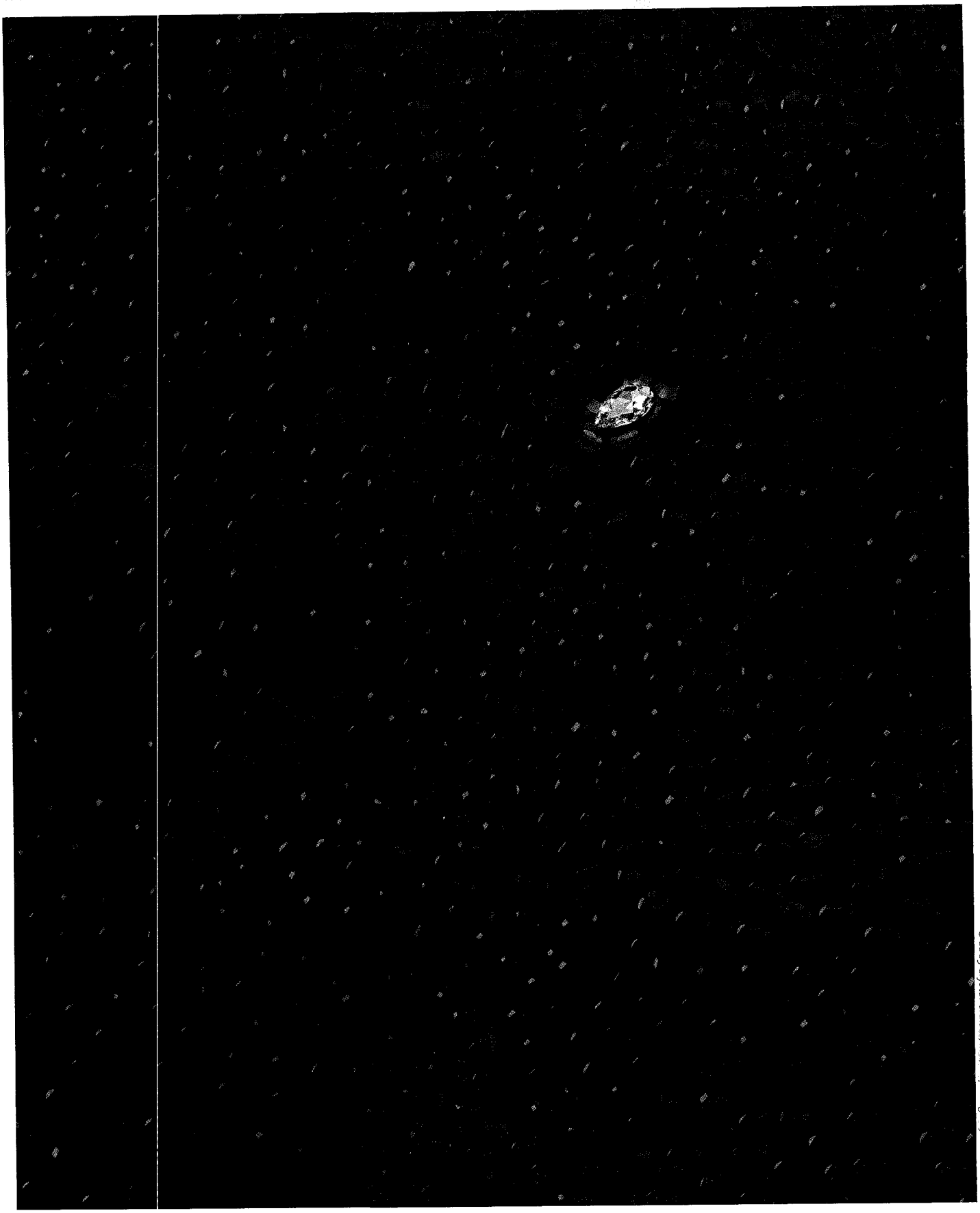

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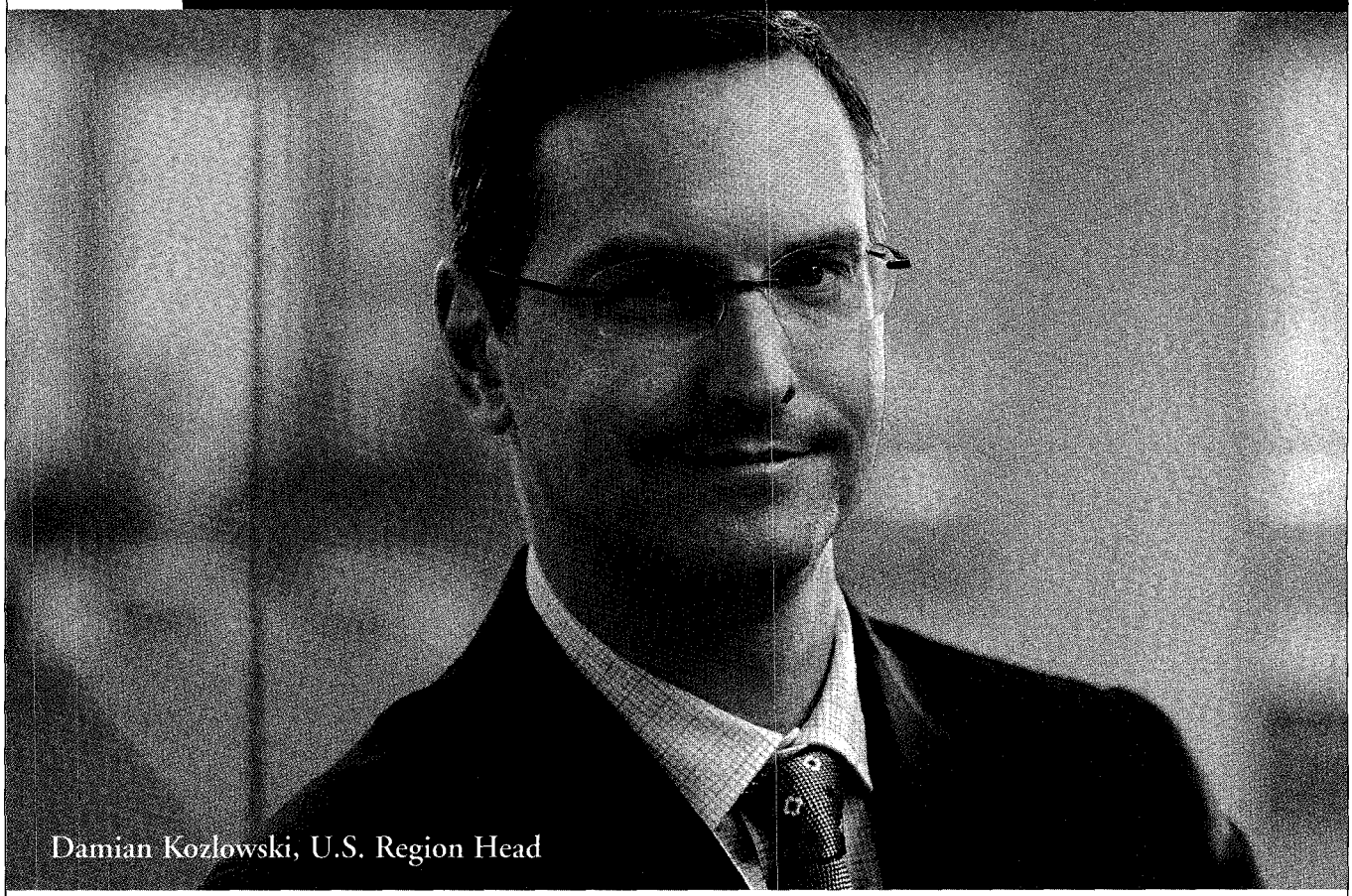
Q&A 4.0

The importance of trust in a private banking relationship.


Damian Kozlowski, U.S. Region Head

Q: How do you define the role of a private banker?
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Q: So what characteristics must a private banker possess?
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THE AGENDA

THIS MONTH, *the multimillionaire Blair Hull's campaign in Illinois; an unusual divide among Catholic priests; Madame Chiang Kai-shek in memoriam*

JOSHUA GREEN
"Hull is most animated by those aspects of campaigning that can be quantified and formulated ... I asked if he really could write an algorithm to help win the election. His face lit up."
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ANDREW GREELEY
"Older priests today often complain that their younger colleagues are arrogant, pompous, and rigid, and that they love to parade around in clerical dress."
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BRUCE HOFFMAN
In Israel the bodies of suicide-bombing victims are immediately removed—which means "fewer pictures of corpses or body bags on the news, so the attackers are denied some of the fear and imagery of death that they seek to disseminate."
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CHRISTOPHER SHEA
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MARK STEYN
"For all her love of America, [Madame Chiang Kai-shek] never troubled herself with whether American notions of liberty or justice would be useful to China. Madame tailored her act to her audience; even the Georgia drawl was variable."
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A TWO-PLANET SPECIES?

The right way to think about our space program

BY WILLIAM LANGEWIESCHE

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In the aftermath of the breakup of the space shuttle *Columbia* an important debate on the purpose and future of the U.S. human-space-flight program is under way, though perhaps not as forthrightly as it should be. The issue at stake is not space exploration in itself but the necessity of launching manned (versus robotic) vehicles. Because articles of faith are involved, the arguments tend to be manipulative and hyperbolic. If the debate is to be productive, that needs to change.

The proponents of manned space flight—particularly at NASA—are in an unenviably defensive position. They argue weakly for the operational flexibility provided by astronauts in space, and trot out the story of the Hubble Space Telescope's in-orbit repair, as if this single success might justify two decades of shuttle flights; they advertise the applied scientific benefits of performing laboratory-style experiments in orbit, though they cannot point to much of significance that has arisen from them; and finally, bizarrely, they argue that only the excitement of a human-space-flight program can persuade the American public to foot the bill for the robotic efforts—a self-indicting logic if ever there was one. When all else fails, they fall back on the now empty idea that the shuttle program is a matter of national prestige—or on the still emptier claim, made obliquely by the NASA administrator Sean O'Keefe last spring, that a retreat from human space flight would be akin to a return to the Stone Age for all humankind.

That sort of talk allows the opponents of human space flight to play the role of the rationalists. They question the effect on the national psyche of successive accidents, debunk NASA's orbital science, and describe the ultra-expensive International Space Station as hardly more than an artificial destination for an ill-conceived spaceship with nowhere else to go. They are right about all that. While they are at it, they juxtapose the human-space-flight budget (currently about $6 billion annually) with underfunded research on Earth (for example, in oceanography and clean energy), and they point to the history of absurd cost overruns in both the shuttle and the space-station programs; NASA's manipulation of budget figures; and its well-demonstrated managerial incompetence. Again, these are all valid arguments. But the

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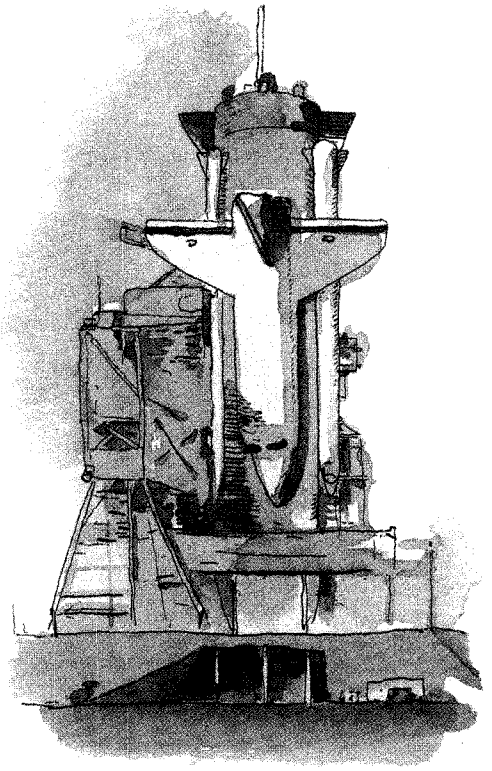
critics here are not merely noting the problems in human space flight; they are setting up a straw man—the shuttle—in order to knock a much larger thing down. An honest national debate would demand more.

Such a debate would almost certainly lead to the conclusion that the United States has for thirty years followed human-space-flight policies that are directionless and deeply flawed, and that those policies must now be radically changed, with whatever regret about the historical costs. Chances are that such a change would involve maintaining the space station in its current, unfinished state, and doing so in the least expensive way, with cargoes and minimal crews launched atop subsidized Russian



rockets—after laws that currently prohibit such subsidies are repealed. But it would also involve permanently grounding the shuttle fleet, and shutting down much of the associated NASA infrastructure. The savings would be large and immediate.

This would not mean, however, that the opponents of human space flight had won. Indeed, it may be that a pause to regroup is precisely what a vigorous human-space-flight program now needs. One thing for sure is that the American public is more sophisticated than the space community has given it credit for. In the event of a grounding the public might well be presented with a question now asked only of insiders—not whether there are immediate benefits to be gleaned from a human presence in space but, more fundamentally, whether we are to be a two-planet species. If upon due consideration the public's answer is "yes," as it probably should be, the solutions will be centuries in coming. Compared with the scale of such an ambition, a pause of a few decades now to rethink and rebuild will seem like nothing at all.

William Langewiesche is a national correspondent of The Atlantic.

A GAMBLING MAN

Blair Hull thinks he has found the formula for how to buy a Senate seat

BRIEF LIVES

JOSHUA GREEN

As he wound up his fifteen-minute stump speech on health care, Blair Hull, a first-time Democratic senatorial candidate from Illinois, mentioned offhandedly to his audience of seniors, assembled in the town of Orland Hills for a Thanksgiving luncheon, "If elected, I will not accept a salary or a pension." Hull continued talking—unaware, it appeared, of the audible gasp that greeted this news. An elderly woman seated beside me turned to me in disbelief and then adjusted her hearing aid and returned her attention to Hull with what seemed like renewed concentration. Most people would treat the issue of forgoing a salary and retirement plan with considerably more gravity than Hull. Most politicians would do so at the beginning of a stump speech, not the end. The issue was an afterthought to Hull, and the episode was characteristic of one of this year's most noteworthy campaigns.

Blair Hull can afford to be cavalier about a senator's $158,000 salary, because he is the richest person ever to seek office in Illinois. He has a larger staff than any of his competitors. He pays his staffers more than any of the nine Democratic presidential candidates pay theirs. And there is a very good chance that he will spend more just on Illinois's March 16 Democratic primary than all but one or two of the Democratic presidential hopefuls will spend nationwide throughout the campaign. When I joined him for a few days in November, Hull was in the midst of the most expensive campaign in Illinois history, having pledged to spend as much as $40 million in pursuit of the seat being vacated by the Republican Peter Fitzgerald.

Hull's has all the trappings of a state-of-the-art campaign: meetups, a blog, and a timeshare in a corporate jet, not to mention a red, white, and blue "Hull-on-Wheels" RV that is featured prominently in his television commercials and has become a rolling symbol of the campaign. And at least in theory Hull, who is sixty-one, is a formidable candidate: as a former high school teacher, union worker, and board member of NARAL, he appeals to important Democratic constituencies; as the lone veteran in the field, he can oppose the war in Iraq unquestioned. His unusual life story, too, sets Hull apart from the drab lawyers, state representatives, and political scions who normally pursue office in Illinois, though in fact he is less flamboyant than his campaign and personal history suggest.

Trained in mathematics and computer science, Hull became part of a notorious card-counting ring that operated in Nevada in the 1970s. He beat the odds—

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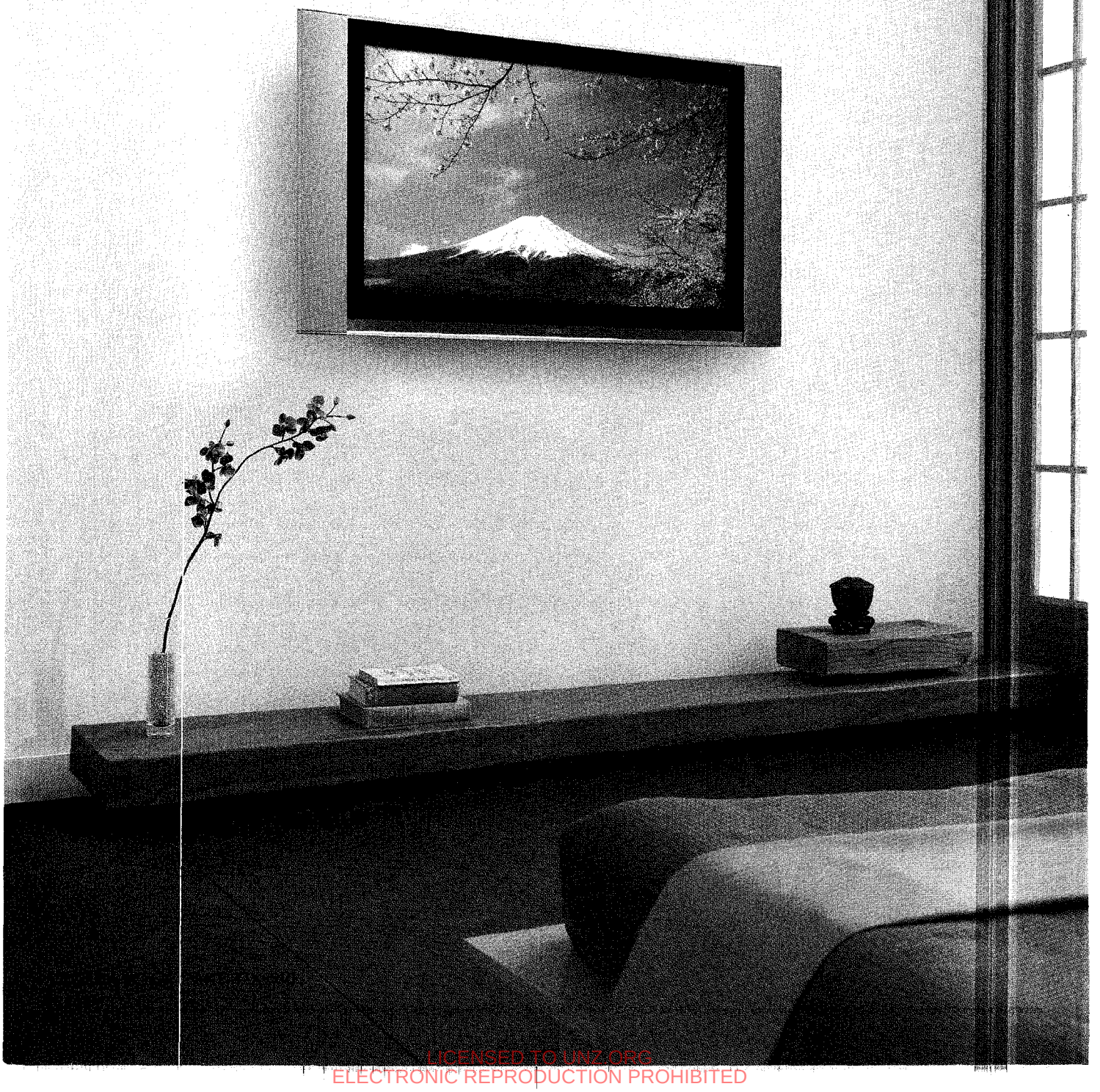

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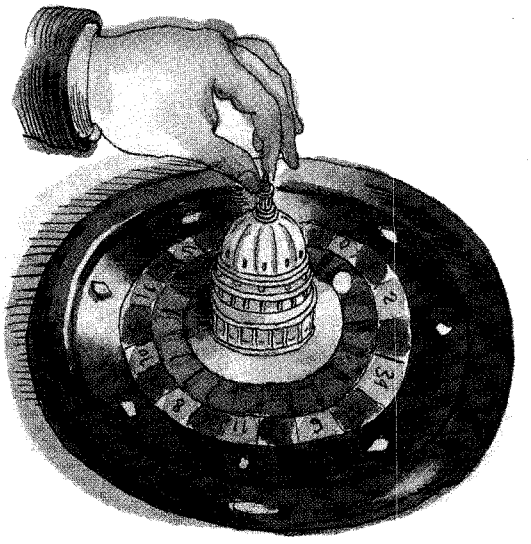
or, rather, beat the house by shifting the odds in his favor—by devising intricate mathematical formulas that called for a skilled team of card counters to help determine when and how to bet in blackjack. The team consistently turned a profit until one member blew its cover by publishing a self-aggrandizing tell-all book, *The Big Player*. Hull quit blackjack with $25,000 and a habit of citing the economist William F. Sharpe to anyone who questioned his wisdom in playing cards: "Investing is the sacrifice of current consumption for expected future gain; gambling is the sacrifice of current consumption for expected future loss." Hull always expected future gain. As if to underscore his analytical rigor, he used his winnings to found Hull Trading Co., a computerized options firm that earned him $340 million—and the means to run for the Senate—when Goldman Sachs bought it, in 1999.

Hull's candidacy illustrates an increasingly prominent phenomenon: the attempt of rich unknowns to buy their way into major public office. As the cost of campaigns continues to soar, these people have become more important to cash-strapped political parties. Over the past decade a succession of them have spent eye-popping sums: Michael Huffington ($30 million), Al Checchi ($40 million), Jon Corzine ($63 million), Michael Bloomberg ($69 million), and Tony Sanchez ($62 million), to name only a few. These days it is customary in political circles to lament that a Senate seat or a governor's mansion is attainable by the highest bidder. But that really isn't true. For all the advantages that accrue to a wealthy candidate, recent history suggests that it still takes more than money to carry a race. Of those five candidates only Corzine and Bloomberg won—and narrowly. As the neophyte in a field of experienced and politically connected candidates, Hull has finally found a challenge worthy of his quantitative skills, and he intends to apply them literally. His media strategist, Anita Dunn, says, "Blair believes he can come up with an algorithm for winning campaigns."

Since at least the heyday of the Kennedys and the Rockefellers, rich hopefuls have sought to use their bank accounts as a shortcut to elective office. But by the mid-1990s this practice seemed dubious. Ross Perot spent $72 million in a failed 1992 bid for the White House, Steve Forbes $33 million



fruitlessly pursuing the 1996 Republican nomination. Also in 1996 a high-profile group of rich senatorial aspirants—Guy Millner (Georgia), Mark Warner (Virginia), Tom Strickland (Colorado), Tom Bruggere (Oregon), Walt Minnick (Idaho), and Elliott Close (South Carolina)—all lost their respective races. "A lot of people after '96 said this is proof that self-funding candidates can't win," says Steve Jarding, who was a spokesman for the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee at the time.

As a species, such candidates do have certain intrinsic disadvantages. Many are successful businessmen, whose hands-on style doesn't benefit them in their new role as candidates. The tendency to micromanage despite a lack of expertise—call it the Steinbrenner Temptation—often thwarts success. Other newcomers cannot adapt to the unfamiliar folkways of politics. As compelling as a business leader may sound when promising to apply his experience to the government, the skills prized in the business world—originality of thought, the ability to spot problems others don't see—do not necessarily translate to the world of politics, with its particular issues, concerns, and, not least, subjects to avoid. Connecting with average people, a crucial ability, can also be difficult for business leaders and heirs.

A reserved but affable man who bears a passing resemblance to the late character actor J. T. Walsh, Hull evinces none of the egotism common in multimillionaires pursuing office (and no one who runs for the Senate these days, it seems, is anything less than a millionaire). But neither does he show any appetite for politics. Ever the literal-minded mathematician, he is flummoxed by political euphemism and reluctant to employ it, and he seems driven more by a general sense of good intention than any specific passion for policy. Hull is attempting to master policy positions the same way he taught himself blackjack, by studying flash cards, but he admitted that he hadn't bothered with flash cards for weeks. Nor does he seem to relish public speaking. As we traveled across Illinois, while he touted his health-care plan, Hull could muster only a willed enthusiasm. However energetically he employs the standard litany expected of today's political challengers—"an independent fighter," "won't succumb to special interests," will "shine a light on Washington's problems"—it all sounds slightly canned, like a foreigner who has taught himself English by watching C-SPAN.

But Hull's campaign does demonstrate a shrewd understanding of what it takes to buy a Senate seat. In the past few years Corzine and Warner (this time running for Virginia governor) got elected, laying out a strategy that Hull's campaign has largely adopted. Unlike

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Checchi and Huffington, Corzine went beyond television advertising to build his base of support. "Any self-funded candidate who relies on mass media to carry his message in the absence of creating a warm and lasting connection with voters is going to lose," Steve DeMicco, who managed Corzine's campaign, warns. Corzine courted key state officials and built an intricate grassroots network well in advance of the election. (Hundreds of thousands of dollars in charitable donations to Jesse Jackson's Rainbow/PUSH Coalition and similar organizations didn't hurt either.) And he largely resisted the urge to overrule his advisers, though he did refuse the suggestion that he shave his beard. "For the most part," DeMicco says, "he knew what he didn't know."

Hull, too, has assiduously cultivated the grass roots—particularly downstate, where he is counting on outperforming his Chicago-based competitors in the primary. Given that at least six other candidates are vying for the Democratic nomination, the winner should need only 25 to 30 percent of the vote. Though the millions Hull has spent to date have yet to make him the front-runner, his campaign is showing reasonable progress in the difficult task of turning a virtual unknown into a serious prospect for the state's 12 million citizens. Hull has already campaigned full time for more than a year, blanketing the state with television ads, joining parades in the "Hull-on-Wheels" RV, and giving endless talks in small towns similar to Orland Hills. Like other candidates, Hull supports drug reimportation from Canada. He recently took a bus trip to Windsor, Ontario, with seniors who were buying prescription drugs. Unlike other candidates, he paid for the bus, the hotel rooms, and even the doctors' visits. And just as Corzine did, he has spent an astonishing amount of money courting state officials—donating to Rod Blagojevich's successful 2002 campaign for governor of Illinois, for instance, a total of $459,000 in loans, cash, and the use of his jet.

During his campaign Corzine was relentlessly criticized by the media for spending so exorbitantly—treatment that Hull, too, can expect. But rather than assume a defensive crouch, he is trying to spin this to his advantage, limiting voter donations to $100 and stressing that his fortune frees him from special-interest obligations, leaving him beholden only to the voters of Illinois.

It turns out that Hull is that rare breed of candidate who will give an honest assessment of his chances. "At the outset," he told me, "I estimated there was about a ten percent probability" of winning. But by the time he was six months into his campaign, Hull's name recognition and poll support had risen to the point where, he said, "it is clearly above that—and rising." He emphasized his continued willingness to bet millions of dollars that he can win.

Hull is most animated by those aspects of campaigning that can be quantified and formulated. "Politics is very unpredictable," he told me. "More so than blackjack." I asked if he really could write an algorithm to help win the election. His face lit up, and his press secretary winced. "Sure!" he replied. He reached for my notebook and began scribbling as he spoke: "You'd create a persuasion model based on canvassing that says 'the probability of voting for Hull is …' plus some variable on ethnicity … with a positive coefficient on age, a negative coefficient on wealth, and that gives us an equation …" Sure enough, a lengthy equation unfolded across the page that to my untrained eye looked like part of the human genetic code:

Probability = 1 / (1 + exp (–1 x (–3.9659056 + (General Election Weight x 1.92380219) + (Re-Expressed Population Density x .00007547) + (Re-Expressed Age x .01947370) + (Total Primaries Voted x –.60288595) + (% Neighborhood Ethnicity x –.00717530))))

Hull looked pleased. "That's the kind of innovation I will bring to problems in the United States Senate."

What Hull's algorithm did not include is the X-factor associated with wealthy novices: if you have any unpleasant characteristic, your money will exaggerate it. When Elliott Close, a South Carolina textile heir, ran for the Senate in 1996, his consultants thought it politically unwise for him to drive a fancy foreign car. Close dutifully swapped it for a Cadillac. Not long afterward he was ticketed for speeding, and a subsequent newspaper account emphasized his expensive choice of automobile. Exasperated, Close bought a Buick and was said to carry the newspaper clipping in his wallet for the remainder of the campaign. Other examples are not quite as harmless. The Republican businessman Michael Huffington's Senate campaign in California, in 1994, featured a get-tough-on-immigration platform unveiled in the final weeks of the campaign. A few days after the announcement the *Los Angeles Times* reported that Huffington employed an illegal alien as a nanny. Like Close, Huffington lost his election.

Self-financed candidates are usually facing media scrutiny for the first time. They are therefore more susceptible to damaging revelations: a drunk-driving arrest, a history of domestic violence, an illegal nanny. This reality can be daunting.

Nevertheless, there is compelling evidence that Illinois voters will accept a candidate who draws on his own fortune to run for office. They have already elected one: Peter Fitzgerald, who in 1998 spent $14 million of his personal fortune of $40 million to win the seat Hull wants. But after Hull started campaigning, Fitzgerald announced that he would not seek re-election. Spending part of a fortune to become a senator was one thing; going through the rest of it to remain one, apparently, was another. ▲

Joshua Green is a senior editor of The Atlantic *and a contributing editor of* The Washington Monthly.

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YOUNG FOGEYS

Young reactionaries, aging radicals—the U.S. Catholic Church's unusual clerical divide

RELIGION

ANDREW GREELEY

Some forty years ago, as the dramatic events of the Second Vatican Council unfolded, a spotlight was trained on the Catholic Church. It was, commentators said, a revolutionary time. The Church fathers broadened the canons of scriptural interpretation, invited other churches and denominations to engage in friendly dialogue, and attempted to understand the strengths of the modern world. They defended religious freedom, condemned anti-Semitism, and recalled the traditional notion that the Church was made up not just of its clerical hierarchy but also of its laity. They approved the translation of the liturgy into vernacular texts. Although in actual practice the reforms were only modest attempts at housekeeping, made by moderate men who had no intention of destabilizing the Church, they nevertheless contradicted the Church's traditional attitude toward reform—that the Church had not changed, would not change, and could not change. In that regard any reform at all was indeed remarkable.

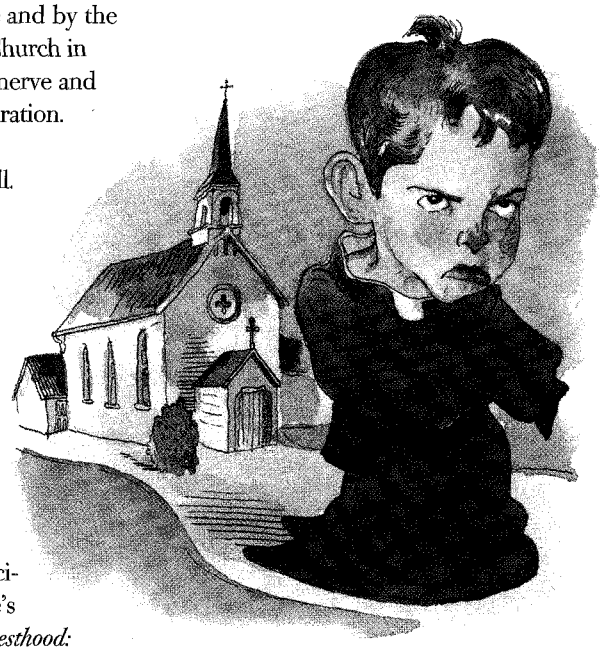
For more than three decades now, as a sociologist and a priest, I have been tracking the evolution of the beliefs and practices of the Catholic clergy and laity in the United States. My most recent analysis, based on survey data that I and others have gathered periodically since Vatican II, reveals a striking trend: a generation of conservative young priests is on the rise in the U.S. Church. These are newly ordained men who seem in many ways intent on restoring the pre–Vatican II Church, and who, reversing the classic generational roles, define themselves in direct opposition to the liberal priests who came of age in the 1960s and 1970s.

The divisions created by Vatican II are not new, of course. Caught up in the reform euphoria that followed the council, the lower clergy and the laity almost immediately developed a new ideology based on respect for women and for the freedom (including the sexual freedom) of the laity. On these matters, quietly or loudly, the laity and the lower clergy did resist the teachings of the Church.

The backlash was swift. Church leaders, realizing that reform had slipped out of their control, grew increasingly convinced of the need for a Restoration—a movement in which the upper clergy would close ranks and reassert their authority. Newly appointed bishops would restore the rules; theologians who disagreed would be silenced; and, as much as possible, the old order would be reestablished. Even some of the progressives of the council, frightened by the laity's exuberant interest in change and by the declining influence of the Church in the United States, lost their nerve and joined in the call for a Restoration. Today's young conservative priests are rallying to this call.

Who are these young counter-revolutionaries? Several studies are helpful in answering this question: a 1970 National Opinion Research Center study (with which I was involved); two studies released by the *Los Angeles Times*, in 1994 and 2002; and a 2002 study by the sociologist Dean R. Hoge. Hoge's *The First Five Years of the Priesthood: A Study of Newly Ordained Catholic Priests* is particularly useful. Hoge reports that half the newly ordained priests he encountered believe that a priest is fundamentally different from a layperson—that he is literally a man apart. Hoge also reports that almost a third of these priests feel that the laity need to be "better educated to respect the authority of the priest's word." These beliefs are strikingly at odds with those of the predominantly liberal generation of new priests studied in the 1970 NORC survey. Today's young priests tend to want to restore the power that the clergy held not only before Vatican II but also before a large educated Catholic laity emerged as a powerful force in the Church after World War II. Older priests today often complain that their younger colleagues are arrogant, pompous, and rigid, and that they love to parade around in clerical dress. The image that comes to mind is young versions of the old ethnic monsignors of the Depression era.

Stark differences exist between older and younger priests on many major areas of concern within the Church. The 2002 *Los Angeles Times* study reveals that priests of the Vatican II generation overwhelmingly support the idea that



priests should be allowed to marry. In the study 80 percent of priests aged forty-six to sixty-five were in favor, as were 74 percent of those aged sixty-six to seventy-five. Only about half the priests under thirty-five, however, supported the idea. The study revealed a clear divide, too, on the ordination of women. Sixty percent of priests aged fifty-six to sixty-five, and at least half of those aged forty-six to seventy-five, supported the idea, but only 36 percent of priests under forty-six did. Significantly, even priests over seventy-five—whose views took shape well before Vatican II—

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were slightly more likely to support the marriage of priests and the ordination of women than were the young priests.

The lines are a bit less clear on questions of sexual ethics. According to the same *Los Angeles Times* study, about half of all priests reject premarital sex and homosexual sex as always wrong. But only about 40 percent of the younger generation believe that birth control is always wrong—a revealing failure of the Restoration efforts of the past thirty years, which have been fundamentally opposed to birth control. And younger priests seem to have a higher general regard for women than older priests do—an attitude demonstrated most clearly in the 1994 *Los Angeles Times* study, in responses to questions about support for official condemnation of sexism and for better ministry to women, and concern for the situation of nuns. This attitude, which is in line with the views of the laity, explains some of the clergy's resistance to the Church's teachings on sexuality. Nonetheless, younger priests are more than twice as likely as priests aged fifty-five to sixty-five to think that birth control and masturbation are always wrong, and they are significantly more likely to think that homosexual sex and premarital sex are always wrong.

Priests as a group are simply not in touch with the laity. In the 2002 *Los Angeles Times* study only thirty-six of 1,854 priests identified clericalism as one of the major problems facing the Church's laity. Astonishingly, only forty-seven priests thought the sex-abuse scandals worth mentioning. For some reason, priests of all generations are unable or unwilling to see the clergy as responsible for the departure of disaffected laypersons—a problem that today plagues the U.S. Church.

To explain the laity's dissatisfaction with the Church, priests from all generations tend to trot out the usual litany: individualism, materialism, secularism, lack of faith, lack of prayer, lack of commitment, media bias, hedonism, sexual freedom, feminism, family breakdown, lack of education, and apathy. The advantage of such explanations is that they free priests from any personal responsibility and put the blame on factors over which the clergy cannot be expected to exercise much control. The rectory thus becomes an isolated citadel battered by cultural forces, which encourages precisely the sort of closed, band-of-brothers mentality that the Vatican II reforms were designed to break down.

Andrew Greeley is a priest of the Archdiocese of Chicago and teaches sociology at the University of Chicago and the University of Arizona. This article is drawn from his book Priests: A Calling in Crisis, *to be published this spring. His book* The Catholic Revolution *will be published at the same time, as will* The Priestly Sins, *the latest of Greeley's many novels.*

AFTERMATH

In Jerusalem cleaning up after a suicide bombing is business as usual

SECURITY

BRUCE HOFFMAN

Jerusalem became the suicide-terrorism capital of the world on March 17, 2002, when a suicide bomber blew himself up next to a city bus, wounding twenty people and killing himself. With this attack—the twenty-fourth by suicide bombers in the city, according to the comprehensive terrorist-incident database maintained by Haifa University's National Security Studies Center—the number of incidents recorded in Jerusalem surpassed that in Colombo, Sri Lanka, the scene of frequent Tamil Tiger attacks during the 1990s. As of this writing Jerusalem had suffered thirty-seven suicide attacks, which had killed 242 people and injured 1,631 others—and the city is very likely to remain the top target for suicide terrorism in the foreseeable future. The trauma inflicted by such attacks is impossible to avoid or overestimate, but the city has developed a remarkable ability to quickly restore a semblance of order and dignity.

"This city has it down to a science," a policeman in Jerusalem told me recently. It was 1:30 in the morning, and we were watching a street sweeper, brushes spinning and water spraying, maneuvering along Emek Refaim—the aptly named "Valley of the Ghosts," which is the main thoroughfare of the city's upscale German Colony neighborhood. Less than two hours before, a suicide bomber had blown himself up just inside a packed café there, killing seven and wounding more than fifty.

As frequently happens, the bomber had been unable to get to his primary target, which appears to have been the pizza restaurant next door. A security guard at the entrance refused to admit him, so he simply moved on to the next storefront. Here, too, a security guard attempted to prevent him from entering, but unsuccessfully; the bomber forced his way into the café and detonated his bomb, which he had concealed in a belt beneath his shirt. The force of the blast shattered the café's floor-to-ceiling plate-glass windows and created a torrent of lethal shrapnel, augmented by thousands of tiny ball bearings packed in canvas pouches that were sewn onto the bomber's belt.

The first call for help was probably made to 101, the emergency telephone number of the Magen David Adom, Israel's version of the Red Cross, which is responsible for the country's medical-response teams and ambulances. In the event of such calls MDA dispatchers follow a strict procedure. First they alert the ambulance teams, who are summoned by pager. Then, by both radio and pager, they notify the MDA's national headquarters, in Tel Aviv; the police (Israel has a national police force, not individual local forces); and neighboring MDA regions and hospitals. Listening in on these alerts, or receiving notification on their

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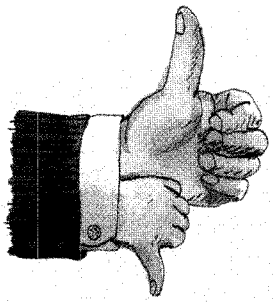

THE LIST

NO HANDS CLAPPING

President Clinton joked during his 2000 State of the Union address that it was like watching a seesaw—a lopsided one. As he ticked off dozens of proposals, the Democrats, sitting to his right, leaped up and cheered, while the Republicans, to his left, sat dourly on their hands. Since President Bush's election, of course, the congressional seesaw has tilted in a new direction, but the political audience's reaction to the State of the Union still serves as a good measure of Red State/Blue State divisions.

Here are lines that Republicans greeted with loud applause during President Bush's 2003 State of the Union speech, while the Democrats glared glumly into space or checked their watches. —*CHRISTOPHER SHEA*

1. "Jobs are created when the economy grows; the economy grows when Americans have more money to spend and invest; and the best, fairest way to make sure Americans have that money is not to tax it away in the first place."

2. "I am proposing that all the income-tax reductions set for 2004 and 2006 be made permanent and effective this year."

3. "And under my plan, as soon as I sign the bill, this extra money will start showing up in workers' paychecks. Instead of gradually reducing the marriage penalty, we should do it now."

4. "Instead of slowly raising the child credit to a thousand dollars, we should send the checks to American families now."

5. "It's fair to tax a company's profits. It is not fair to again tax the shareholder on the same profits. To boost investor confidence, and to help the nearly ten million seniors who receive dividend income, I ask you to end the unfair double taxation of dividends."

6. "Lower taxes and greater investment will help this economy expand. More jobs mean more taxpayers, and higher revenues to our government. The best way to address the deficit and move toward a balanced budget is to encourage economic growth, and to show some spending discipline in Washington, D.C."

7. "I will send you a budget that increases discretionary spending by four percent next year—about as much as the average family's income is expected to grow. And that is a good benchmark for us. Federal spending should not rise any faster than the paychecks of American families."

8. "As we continue to work together to keep Social Security sound and reliable, we must offer younger workers a chance to invest in retirement accounts that they will control and they will own."

9. "To improve our health-care system we must address one of the prime causes of higher cost, the constant threat that physicians and hospitals will be unfairly sued. Because of excessive litigation, everybody pays more for health care, and many parts of America are losing fine doctors. No one has ever been healed by a frivolous lawsuit. I urge the Congress to pass medical-liability reform."

10. "Americans are doing the work of compassion every day—visiting prisoners, providing shelter for battered women, bringing companionship to lonely seniors. These good works deserve our praise; they deserve our personal support; and when appropriate, they deserve the assistance of the federal government. I urge you to pass both my faith-based initiative and the Citizen Service Act, to encourage acts of compassion that can transform America, one heart and one soul at a time."

Christopher Shea writes a column about academia for The Boston Globe's *"Ideas" section.*

pagers, are the devoutly religious members of ZAKA, a nongovernmental organization whose complete name means "Identification of Disaster Victims" and whose self-proclaimed purpose is to "rescue, save, and be part of the spiritual justice of truth"—that is, to deal with the tiny bits of bone, tissue, teeth, fingernails, and toenails scattered across the pavement and splattered against nearby cars, windows, walls, lampposts, commercial advertisements, and municipal signs.

The police or the MDA crews arrive first, depending on who is closer to the scene when the call comes in. The top priority is to tend to the victims and, simultaneously, to secure the area—to make sure that no other attacker strikes just as medical teams and more police officers arrive, among them counterterrorist, forensics, bomb-disposal, and intelligence squads. For the MDA the highest priority is to follow what Dr. Shmuel Shapira, the deputy director general of Jerusalem's Hadassah Hospitals, calls the "golden ten-minute rule": Get to victims during the critical minutes after an attack, when prompt medical attention—maintaining airways, controlling external hemorrhages—can mean the difference between life and death. Suicide bombings, Shapira notes, are among the most lethal of all terrorist attacks. Ninety percent of those killed in a suicide bombing die at the scene. Most of the survivors are only lightly wounded—and, indeed, more than half of them are discharged from the hospital within twenty-four hours of admittance.

Dead bodies are taken by ambulance to the state mortuary and forensics laboratory at Abu Kabir, in central Israel. In most other countries the dead generally cannot be removed from a crime scene until a preliminary murder investigation is completed; in Israel, however, those killed in suicide attacks are taken away immediately. This is done out of respect for Jewish law (which, insofar as possible, requires burial within twenty-four hours of death), and is a means of

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ensuring prompt identification of the victims, so that their families can be notified. Removing bodies from the scene also means fewer pictures of corpses or body bags on the news, so the attackers are denied some of the fear and imagery of death that they seek to disseminate.

The ambulances that carry dead bodies to the forensics laboratory often carry nylon bags containing body parts collected at the attack scene. A macabre puzzle may confront the forensics unit as it tries to make an accurate count of the victims: which arm or leg belongs to which limbless corpse?

Back at the attack site witnesses are whisked away by the police so that they can be thoroughly debriefed. Police forensics personnel at the same time begin the task of gathering evidence. Clad in white coveralls, bright yellow overshoes, and latex gloves, they comb gutters, sidewalks, windows, walls, and doorways for evidentiary fragments. Colleagues wheeling large magnetic rollers traverse the area, collecting bits of shrapnel and other bomb parts. By this stage ZAKA personnel are usually arguing with the authorities to be allowed to begin their own work.

Finally, within hours, the city's sanitation workers arrive, armed with brooms, brushes, hoses, and street-sweeping vehicles. Ironically, many of the sanitation workers are Palestinians, residents of Arab East Jerusalem who are employed by the municipality. When they receive the signal from the police commander at the scene, they set to work—and soon shattered windows are boarded or taped up, broken glass, masonry, and other debris are swept up, and gutters and sidewalks are scrubbed. Throughout the following day windows and doors in nearby buildings are replaced, the last traces of bloodshed are removed, and the appearance of order is quickly restored—except, of course, at the site of the attack itself. ▲

Bruce Hoffman is the director of the RAND Corporation's Washington, D.C., office.

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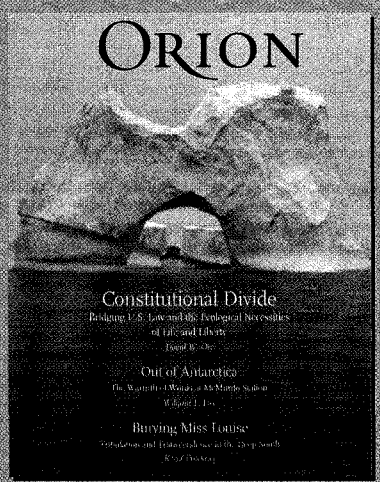

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HALF DRAGON LADY, HALF GEORGIA PEACH

Madame Chiang Kai-shek (1898–2003)

POST MORTEM

MARK STEYN

Claire Chennault, the American founder of China's air aces, the Flying Tigers, met his new boss on June 3, 1937. "A vivacious young girl clad in a modish Paris frock tripped into the room, bubbling with energy and enthusiasm," he recalled. It was "an encounter from which I never recovered," and whatever happened, that "young girl" would "always be a princess to me."

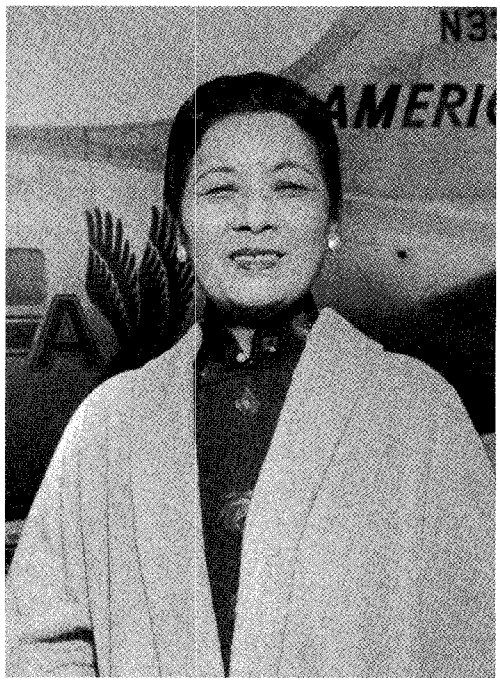
Thus Madame Chiang Kai-shek, half dragon lady, half Georgia peach, and an encounter from which many who should have known better never recovered. Her life is a monument to the power of personality in the great sweep of history. Most people who survive to 105 end up as living anachronisms: their world dies long before they do. But even as a frail centenarian taking her walks in Central Park, unnoticed by joggers and tourists, Soong Mei-ling had the satisfaction of knowing that geopolitically speaking, we live in a world shaped in part by her extraordinary character.

Bad news comes in threes, and so for the most part did Madame Chiang. She lived in three centuries. She was one of only three women to wield real power in modern China: Ci Xi, the former concubine turned Empress Dowager in the final years of the Qing dynasty; Madame Mao, who was jailed shortly after the death of her husband and killed herself in 1991; and in between, and on a different scale, Madame Chiang. She was one of three sisters, of whom it was said, "One loved power, one loved money, one loved China." Mei-ling was the first; she did love power, though in the objective sense she never had a lot of it. But America so loved her that it treated her as if she did.

And so, in the most remarkable of Madame Chiang's threesomes, China was invited to participate with Britain and America in the 1943 Cairo Conference. Roosevelt was insistent that the Chiangs be invited; Churchill thought it preposterous to pretend that General Chiang's China was—along with Britain, the United States, and the Soviet Union—one of the Big Four world powers; its presence at the conference was "an absolute farce." The reason for this difference of opinion was simple: Churchill had never met Madame Chiang; Roosevelt had. Indeed, after visiting with Mei-ling in New York earlier that year, Eleanor Roosevelt announced that she wanted to "take care of her as if she had been my own daughter" and promptly moved her into the White House, which didn't give Churchill a lot of room for maneuver.

Nonetheless, the British Prime Minister's judgment was the correct one, and the languid old Asia hands at the Foreign Office were calling America's man "General Cash My-cheque" long before Washington noticed how much of the billions it had lavished on his country had gotten hoovered up by the generalissimo's near and dear. In fairness to Chiang, a lot of the money ended up in the hands of his wife's family, who were already fabulously wealthy. Mei-ling's father, Charlie Soong, got rich as a Bible salesman in China and then helped bankroll General Sun Yat-sen's 1911 revolution. He had his children educated in the United States, and the girls went to Wesleyan College, in Macon, Georgia. By the time Mei-ling advanced to Wellesley, her English had acquired a southern lilt. The sisters were said to be the first Chinese girls to go to college in America.

Three decades later she became the first Chinese and only the second woman to address Congress. On a prolonged visit in 1943 she enchanted everyone—the Roosevelts, the Republicans, the Hollywood Committee to Receive Madame Chiang Kai-shek (Rita Hayworth, Ginger Rogers, Shirley Temple, and others), an audience of 20,000 at Madison Square Garden, and one of 30,000 at the Hollywood Bowl. Had America been an imperial power, Madame Chiang would have been one of a type. The annals of British colonialism are strewn with exotic figures—Indian maharajahs and African princes—who would have recognized Madame Chiang's ornately convoluted English as she denounced the "convulsions and perfervid paroxysms" of the Cultural Revolution or the "dastardly Communist poltroons" who perpetrated the Tiananmen Square massacre. But the United States is not an imperial power, so Madame Chiang had the field of Americanized exotics all to herself. Her husband spoke little English, and she sold herself to both parties as a bridge between two cultures. Other than the American tenor who sang that quintessentially American wedding song "Oh, Promise Me" at their nuptials, to Madame Chiang East was East and West was West, and hardly e'er the twain did meet; for all her love of America, she never troubled herself with whether American notions of liberty or justice would be useful to China. Madame tailored her act to her audience; even



HULTON ARCHIVE

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the Georgia drawl was variable.

Many consequences flowed from that smash tour of 1943, among them the Cairo Conference, which so inflated the status of General Chiang's China, and (even more of "an absolute farce") the decision to reward the general's insignificant contribution to the Allied victory by giving China one of the five permanent places on the new UN Security Council. Though the British and the Americans had agreed on much in the preceding years, both had their idiosyncratic fetishes: Washington thought that De Gaulle was a poseur and that Chiang would save his country; London thought vice versa. In the objective sense, neither postwar France nor China merited a Security Council seat. But the former was at least a coherent nation-state. Even in the thirties the Chiangs never ruled China, only a shifting sliver of it. A Japanese puppet emperor reigned in Manchuria; there was a Communist regime in Shanxi; the Soviet Union held Mongolia and Xinjiang; Shanghai and other "treaty ports" were garrisoned and run by Britain, America, France, and Italy; and local warlords carved up much of what was left. Buffeted by these various factions, General Chiang moved his court from town to town according to which of his enemies was chastising him least. Chiang's China was unstable; he was never a likely candidate to hold it together; and it was obvious who the likely successors would be. But the Allies gave him a Security Council seat anyway.

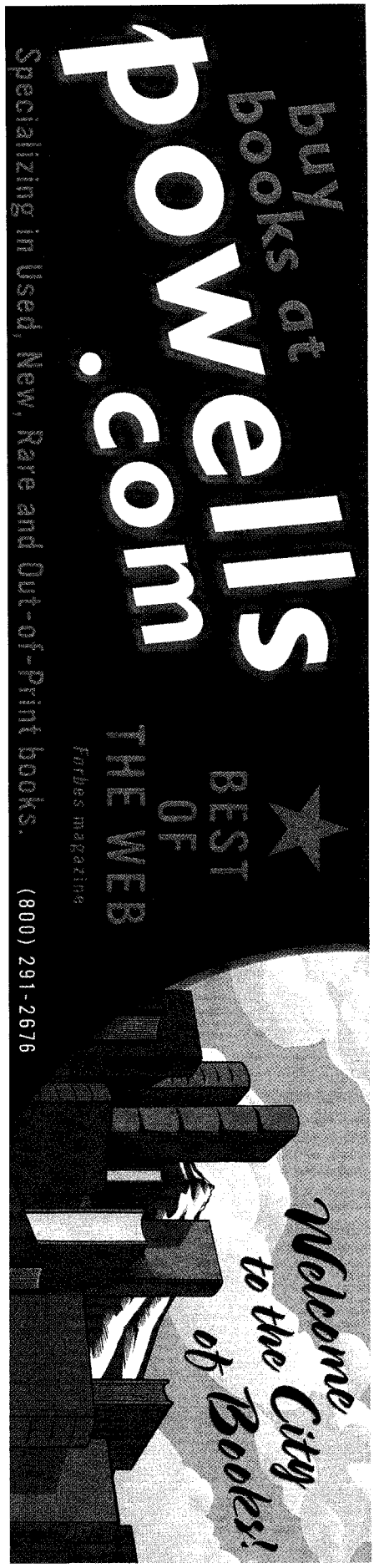
In 1949 the Chiangs left mainland China for the last time and took their government into exile on Formosa, recently returned to the Middle Kingdom by Japan. Mei-ling was no longer the force she once had been in America, but her residual aura helped persuade Washington to endorse an illusion: that she and her husband were the real government of China. Thus for the next two decades one of the five vetoes in the UN Security Council was wielded by a quasi-colonial dictatorship of outsiders on a small, insignificant island. The Soviets were so affronted by America's refusal to cede China's seat to the fellows who actually ran China that they walked out of the council, and in their absence the UN voted for the Korean War.

Maybe some of this would still have happened without Madame Chiang. But it's doubtful that a conventional, locally raised Chinese wife would have so intoxicated an American audience. And the austere general couldn't have done it on his own. In January of 1938 he was one half of *Time*'s "Man and Wife of the Year," a formulation that tells you what angle Henry Luce was interested in: the American college girl running an ancient civilization.

In 1936 Chiang was kidnapped by Marshal Chang, who wanted him to quit battling the Communists and take on the Japanese. Eleven days after his capture Mei-ling flew to Xian to be by her husband's side and turned her charm on Marshal Chang; within forty-eight hours the generalissimo was freed. If she'd stayed home, and if Chiang had been killed by his kidnappers, the last half of the twentieth century might have been very different. China, the UN, the Korean War, McCarthyism—the fragile skein of history snaked back to a delicate, small-boned lady of fierce determination. At the end of her life a woman who'd come into direct contact with all the great forces that blew through her country—from the emperors to Japanese militarism to communism—found that the most potent was the one that made her dad rich a century ago: China is once again Christianity's most fertile recruiting ground.

"Who lost China?" America's anti-communists agonized. Nobody. China was never lost. Chiang Kai-shek had never won it in the first place. And if not for its sentimentalization of "a vivacious young girl clad in a modish Paris frock," America might have seen that six decades ago. ▲

Mark Steyn is a columnist for Britain's Telegraph Group, the Chicago Sun-Times, *and other publications.*



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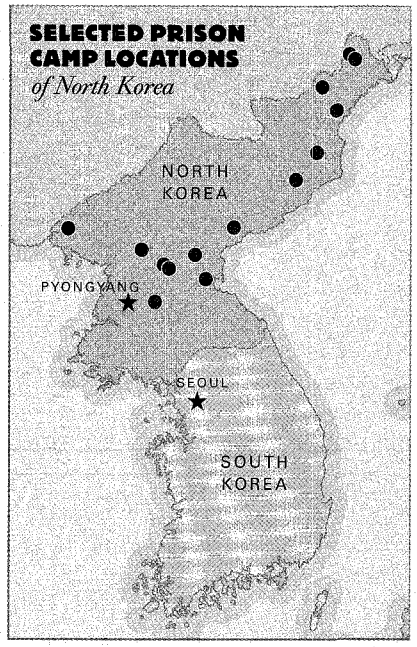
PRIMARY SOURCES

North Korea's murderous prison camps; what is hell—and are you going?; why daughters cause divorce; how to buy biological-weapons material with your credit card

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

The Gulag Peninsula



Anyone who imagines that the age of the concentration camp has passed would do well to read "The Hidden Gulag," a new report on North Korea. Relying on expert analysis, satellite photographs, and the often agonizing testimony of former prisoners, the report paints a bleak portrait of life and death in Kim Jong Il's *kwan-si-lo* (where political offenders may be imprisoned for life, usually without trial, and often along with up to three generations of their families) and *kyo-hwa-so* (where prisoners whose crimes range from felony offenses to unauthorized economic transactions are sentenced to terms that they rarely live to complete). These are death camps in all but name, where prisoners perform dangerous physical labor—mining, logging, and brutal factory work—while subsisting on food rations that are meager at best, starvation-level at worst. Prisoners are publicly executed for "stealing" food; unknown thousands perish from cold, sickness, dehydration, and malnutrition. Some of the grisliest stories come from detention camps for North Korean refugees who have been forcibly repatriated by China. In these camps fetuses unlucky enough to have been conceived outside North Korea are routinely aborted or murdered at birth. According to a mother of seven, who was forced to serve as a midwife in one such camp, "A doctor explained that since North Korea was short on food, the country should not have to feed the children of foreign fathers." She and others recount seeing infants smothered with vinyl cloth, stabbed with forceps in the soft parts of their skulls, or simply buried alive by the boxful.

—"The Hidden Gulag: Exposing North Korea's Prison Camps," U.S. Committee for Human Rights in North Korea

Al Franken Was Right

"After discovering that Saddam Hussein was both actively supporting Al Qaeda and deploying WMDs, the United States, with the full support of the international community, invaded Iraq in March, 2003." This largely inaccurate statement was not torn from a premature draft of the official Bush history of the Iraq War. Rather, it was what roughly 60 percent of Americans believed—in sum or in part—in the aftermath of the war. According to a study conducted by researchers at the University of Maryland, during and immediately following the Iraq War more than half of Americans believed that Saddam was a major supporter of al-Qaeda. Roughly a third believed that Iraq had deployable or deployed WMD and that most of the world supported the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq. The first and the third statements are known to be false; the second is widely accepted to be. So how did so many people get so much wrong? Part of the answer, obviously, is politics: Bush backers, according to the study, were much more likely to believe at least one of the three points than Bush bashers. But the media—and in particular one well-known "fair and balanced" news outlet—seem to have played a part in promoting false beliefs. Whereas only 23 percent of those who relied on NPR or PBS for information about public affairs believed one or more of the propositions, 55 percent of those who relied on CNN did—and 80 percent of those who relied on Fox News did. One might speculate that Bush supporters are more likely to watch (and believe) Rupert Murdoch's news outlets than either Ted Turner's or public broadcasting's. But viewers' preconceived political notions are clearly not the whole story: the Maryland researchers found that whereas 78 percent of Bush supporters who watched Fox were misinformed, only 50 percent of Bush supporters who got their news from PBS and NPR were.

—"Misperceptions, the Media and the Iraq War," Program on International Policy Attitudes/ Knowledge Networks

THE NATION

Hell Is for Other People

Americans mix belief in spiritualism and reincarnation with traditional Christian teachings about the afterlife, according to a new survey from the Barna Research Group. The survey finds that nearly 20 percent of Americans (including 10 percent of "born-again Christians") believe that people are reincarnated after death, and 34 percent think that it's possible to communicate, *Crossing Over*–style, with the recently departed. But doctrines of a more traditional nature still have widespread appeal: 76 percent of those polled stated that heaven exists, and nearly as many (71 percent) expressed a belief in hell. Hell isn't necessarily perceived as teeming with fire and brimstone—in fact, only 32 percent of adults called it "an actual place of torment and suffering," whereas 40 percent called it "a state of eternal separation from God's presence." Either way, though, if Americans are right, the Inferno's population growth will be slow: 64 percent confidently predict that they themselves will find their way to paradise, whereas only .005 percent expect that they will be sent to hell.

—"Americans Describe Their Views About Life After Death," Barna Research Group

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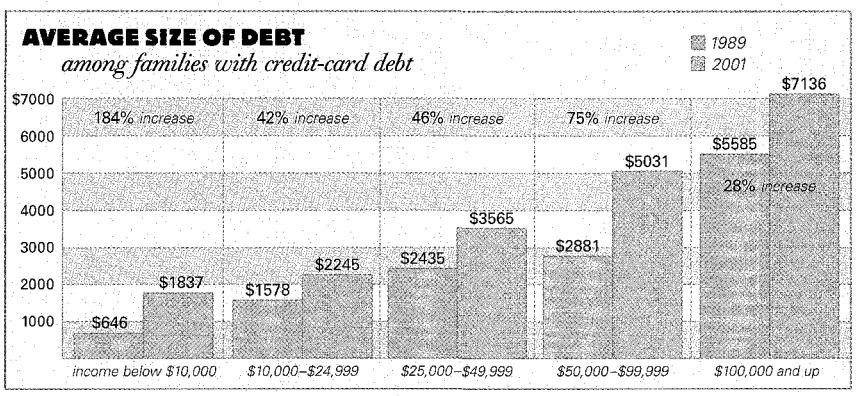
The New Loan Sharks

Americans owe credit-card companies more than $730 billion, more than four times what they did just fifteen years ago, and credit-card-company profits shot up by 20 percent in 2001. Researchers at Demos, a nonpartisan think tank, recently documented this remarkable growth. Among their findings: industry deregulation has made credit so easy to get that three out of four families now wield at least one credit card, and average credit-card debt is 53 percent greater than it was a decade ago. More people having more access to more credit would appear to be a good thing—but the dark side of the story is that credit-card interest rates (currently averaging 13 percent) and fees (averaging $29 for late payments) have stayed high, even through this era of record-low general interest rates. These punitive rates fall particularly hard on the poor and the elderly: very low-income families (those earning less than $10,000) and seniors are increasingly swimming in debt. From 1989 to 2001 the credit-card debt carried by these poor families increased on average by 184 percent, while seniors' debt increased by 149 percent. The industry now extends as much credit to people in the bottom two quintiles as it did to those in the top two at the beginning of the 1990s.

—"Borrowing to Make Ends Meet," Demos: A Network for Ideas and Action



Girl Trouble

Do daughters cause divorce? A new study by the economists Gordon Dahl and Enrico Moretti reports that marriages with male offspring are significantly more durable than those with female offspring. This is not true just in a society with a well-known preference for male children, such as Vietnam, where the parents of a girl are 25 percent more likely to divorce than the parents of a boy—it's also true in the United States, where a couple whose only child is female is 4.4 percent more likely to divorce than a couple whose only child is a boy, and where a couple with three girls is nearly nine percent more likely to split up than a couple with three boys. Of the possible explanations for this phenomenon, simple gender bias (particularly among fathers) seems the most plausible, especially when one takes into account some of the study's other findings. For instance, men are more likely to marry divorced mothers of sons than they are to marry divorced mothers of daughters. Men are also more likely to marry a pregnant lover if the unborn child is revealed to be male. The bias in favor of boys extends even into the marriage bed: couples with multiple daughters are more likely to try for another baby than are couples with multiple sons.

—"The Demand for Sons: Evidence From Divorce, Fertility, and Shotgun Marriage," Gordon Dahl (University of Rochester) and Enrico Moretti (UCLA)

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Weapons of Mass Availability

In his 2002 State of the Union address President Bush warned that members of the so-called axis of evil "could provide [weapons of mass destruction] to terrorists, giving them the means to match their hatred." Two recent reports from the General Accounting Office, the investigative arm of Congress, suggest that one good place for terrorists to seek such weapons would be the federal government of the United States. In the first report federal auditors found serious fault with the security practices of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, the agency charged with securing the country's commercial nuclear-power plants. In a review of eighty mock attacks conducted from 1991 to 2001, the GAO found that even when plant managers were given as long as a year to make one-time security enhancements, 22 percent of plants failed to repel attackers. But why attack a power plant to acquire weapons material when all you need is a credit card? According to the second GAO report, investigators logged on to a federal auction Web site (www.govliquidation.com) and spent just $4,100 for almost $47,000 worth of equipment, including a biological safety cabinet, a bacteriological incubator, a laboratory centrifuge, and chemical-biological protective suits—all necessary for the production of biological weapons. More disquieting still, further GAO inquiry revealed that several actual buyers of biological gear exported the merchandise to the Philippines, Malaysia, Egypt, and the United Arab Emirates, whence some of it was shipped to unspecified parties in India, Pakistan, and other countries.

—"Nuclear Regulatory Commission: Oversight of Security at Commercial Nuclear Power Plants Needs to Be Strengthened" and "DOD Excess Property: Risk Assessment Needed on Public Sales of Equipment That Could Be Used to Make Biological Agents," General Accounting Office

For links to the reports and documents discussed in these pages visit www.theatlantic.com/issues/2004/02/primarysources.htm

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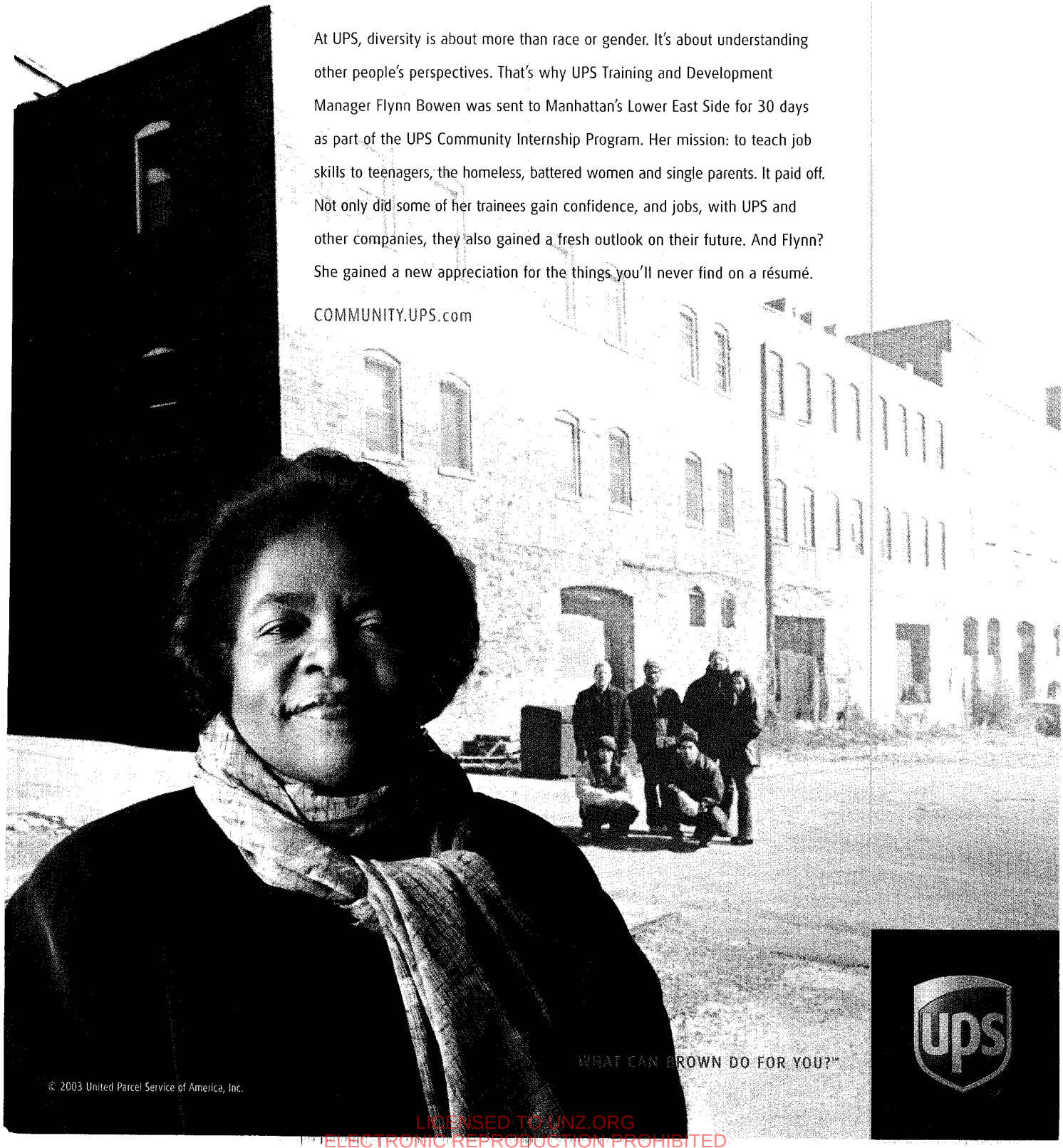

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THE NATION IN NUMBERS

PACKING, CRACKING, AND KIDNAPPING

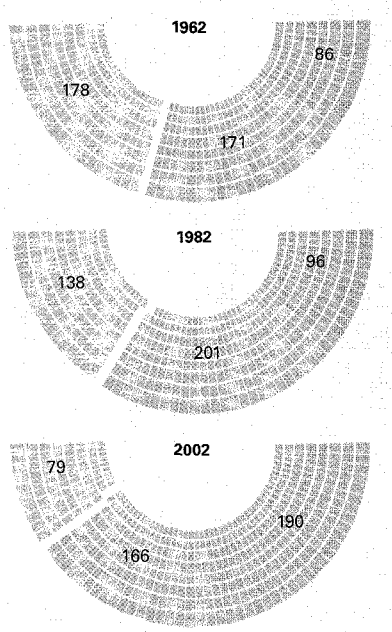
The science of gerrymandering

Twice last year, in classic displays of the theater of the politically absurd, Democratic legislators in Texas fled the state as part of an unsuccessful attempt to thwart the passage of a congressional redistricting plan that was favorable to Republicans. The journeys were designed to deprive the state legislature of a quorum, and led to intensive efforts by Republicans—who called on both the Texas Department of Public Safety and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security for assistance—to locate and return the absent legislators.

Leaving aside its melodramatically Texan flavor, the episode demonstrates the importance that politicians rightly attach to how district lines are drawn on the congressional map. Political observers estimate that Texas's recently passed redistricting plan has the potential to shift control of perhaps seven of the state's thirty-two congressional seats to the Republicans in November—despite there being no evidence of a parallel shift in Texas voters' party preferences.

GERRYMANDERING'S RESULT

A reduction in competitive seats in the House of Representatives



Owing to a confluence of increased opportunity and improved technology, the practice of gerrymandering or redrawing electoral districts for partisan advantage (named after the Massachusetts governor Elbridge Gerry and a salamander-shaped district he approved in 1812) is flourishing in the United States as never before. In response to 1962 and 1983 Supreme Court decisions requiring congressional districts within each state to be nearly identical in population size, states began redrawing them following each new census, often in odd-looking ways that—in order to equalize population among districts—cross county lines or other boundaries that traditionally defined "communities of interest."

Redistricters have typically used three techniques to gain advantage: "packing," "cracking," and, as the political scientist Bernard Grofman calls it, "kidnapping." The map of greater Tampa, at the upper right, illustrates the first two techniques.

Following the 2000 Census, Florida's Republican-dominated state legislature redrew the Eleventh District, which encompasses the city of Tampa, so as to "pack" Democratic voters from surrounding districts into what was already a Democratic bastion with a popular incumbent. The idea was that not only would the votes of the additional Democrats effectively be wasted—since Democratic victory in the district was a foregone conclusion—but the surrounding areas, now divested of some Democrats, would become relatively more Republican. Specifically, the Florida legislature extended the Eleventh District across the expanse of Tampa Bay, so that it included low-income minority neighborhoods from wealthier St. Petersburg; on the map it looks as though a small chunk has broken off from the Eleventh District and floated across the bay, washing ashore in the Republican Tenth. A small, heavily Democratic strip of Manatee County—previously a part of the Republican-leaning Thirteenth District—was also added to the Eleventh. The reconstituted Eleventh is now 61 percent Democrats and 52 percent minority members.

This redrawing also "cracked" the Democratic bases in the Tenth and Thirteenth Districts, ensuring that although Democratic populations in these areas still hovered near 50 percent, their party could not achieve a majority. Throughout Florida packing and cracking have helped the Republicans to gain an eleven-seat majority in the state's congressional delegation, even though Florida's voting population—as the 2000 election made famously clear—is evenly divided between Republicans and Democrats.

The oddly shaped Twelfth District in Pennsylvania (shown to the lower right) is a good example of "kidnapping"—in effect, moving an incumbent's established constituency out from under him or her. When Pennsylvania lost two House seats following the 2000 Census (because its population had declined relative to other states), the Republican-controlled legislature eliminated the Twentieth District, held by the Democratic representative Frank Mascara, and attached its more industrial, Democratic areas to the Twelfth District, the province of the Democratic representative John Murtha, an extremely popular fourteen-term incumbent from the Pittsburgh area. Mascara's home, meanwhile, along with the middle- and upper-middle-class suburbs in Allegheny and Westmoreland Counties, was placed in a redrawn, solidly suburban and Republican Eighteenth District. (Mascara chose to run in the Twelfth District, losing the primary to Murtha.)

As recently as the early 1990s redistricting was done largely with paper maps, glue, and colored pens; the process was slow and tedious, limiting the number of options that legislators could consider. That changed in the last round of redrawing. By 2001, when Geographic Information Systems (GIS) software had become widely available, mappers were able to specify a desired outcome or outcomes—the number of people in a district, say, or the percentage of Democrats in it—and have the program design a potential new district instantly. These systems allow redistricters to

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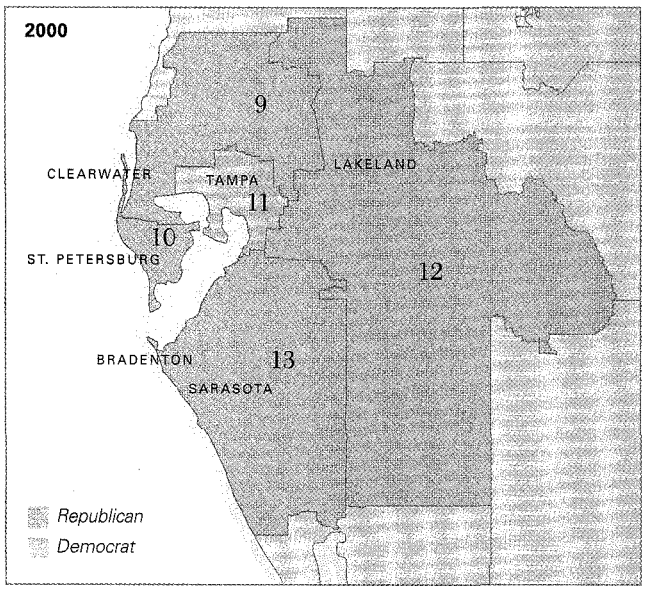
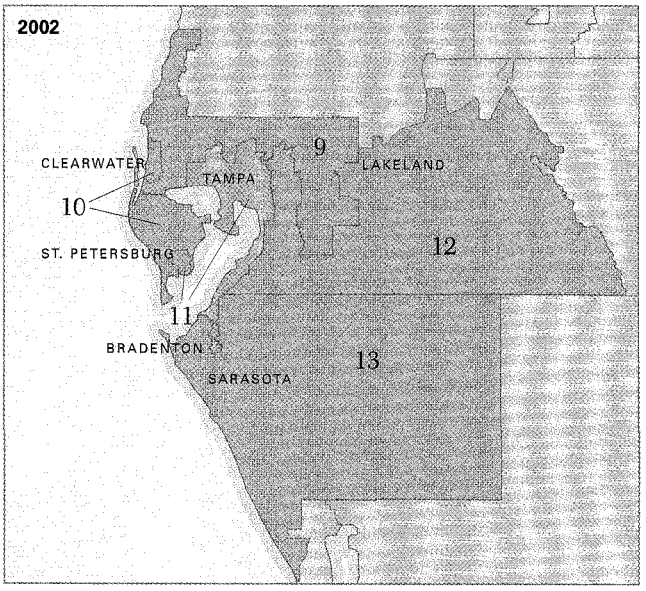
A MINORITY OUTPOST IN ST. PETERSBURG

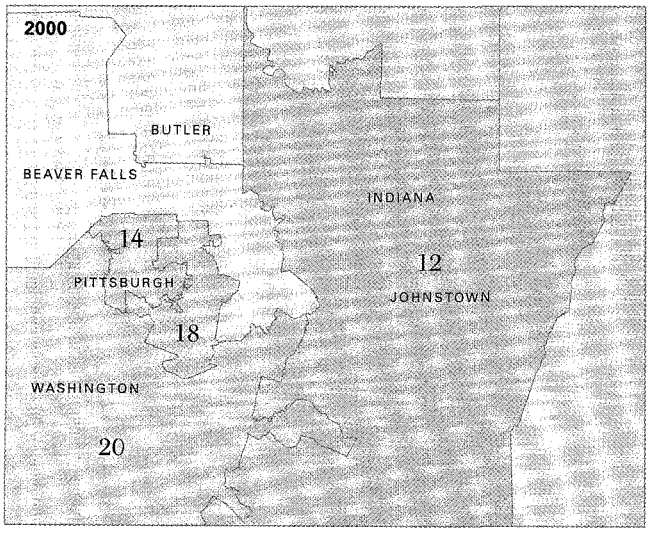
The Democratic Eleventh District was reconfigured to absorb as many Democrats as possible, which shored up the strength of surrounding Republican districts. The African-American share of the Tenth District was reduced from 11.3 percent to 3.6 percent.

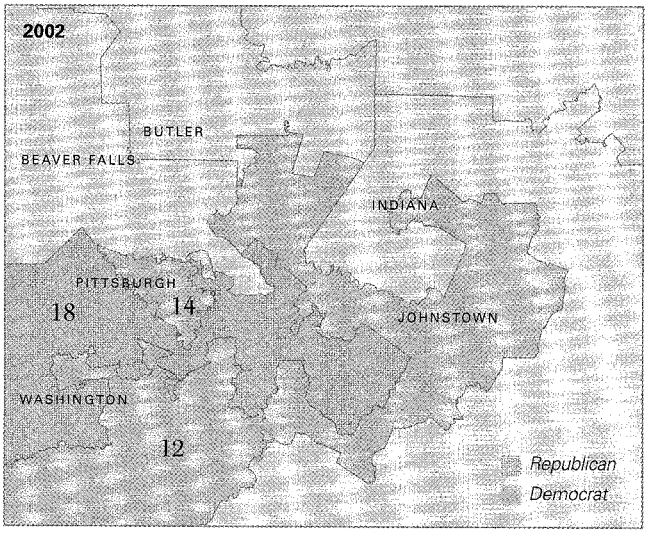




RORSCHACH TEST AROUND PITTSBURGH

The Democratic-leaning Twentieth District was eliminated. Heavily Democratic areas were loaded into the redrawn Twelfth District, already held by a fourteen-term Democrat. Republican-leaning suburbs were aggregated into the redrawn Eighteenth District, shifting the seat to the Republicans.





create hundreds of rough drafts easily and quickly, and to choose from among them maps that are both politically and aesthetically appealing. (Aesthetics matter because accusations of gerrymandering are loudest when states have bizarrely shaped districts.)

The increasing frequency and effectiveness of gerrymandering can be seen in the steady dwindling of competitive House races over time. In 2002 just seventy-nine House seats were won by a margin of less than 20 percent. Eighty sitting members faced no major-party opposition, and only four incumbents—the fewest ever—lost to non-incumbent challengers. The elimination of competition in so many districts is one reason why ideologically extreme candidates are being elected more often, creating a House of Representatives that does not represent the largely moderate views of the nation's voters. It has also fostered a perception among citizens that their votes do not matter.

They may not. The latest round of redistricting left so few competitive seats that the Republicans will probably maintain a majority in the House until after 2010, when the next census demands another wholesale redrawing of district lines. This, in turn, means that whoever controls statehouses that year may be able to engineer a political advantage to last another ten years. Indeed, it seems possible that politics in the House of Representatives will come to be marked not by two-year electoral cycles but by ten-year periods of stasis interrupted by bitter fights and seismic shifts after each census. —*DON PECK AND CAITLIN CASEY*

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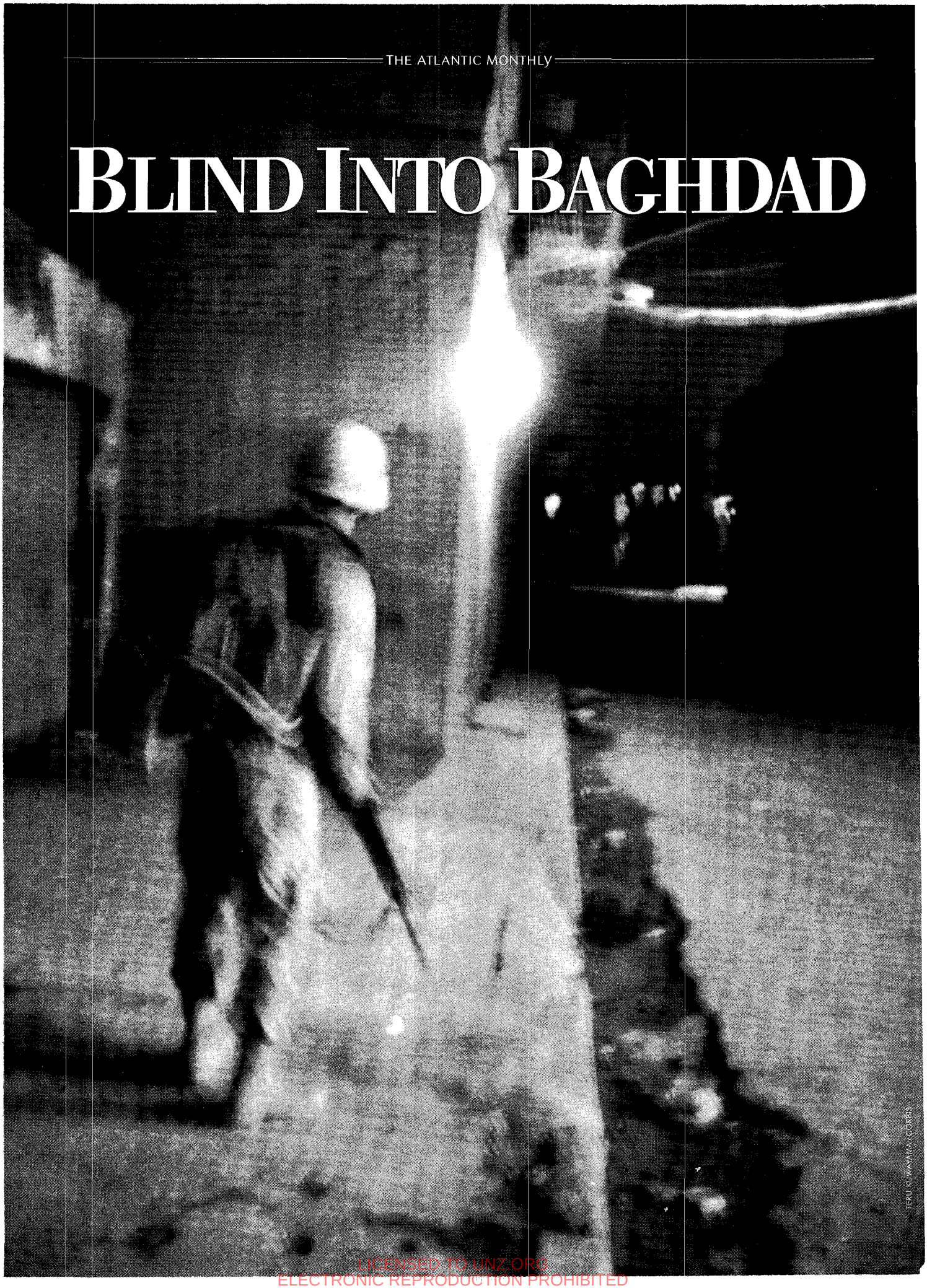
BLIND INTO BAGHDAD



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The U.S. occupation of Iraq is a debacle not because the government did no planning but because a vast amount of expert planning was willfully ignored by the people in charge. The inside story of a historic failure

BY JAMES FALLOWS

.....

On a Friday afternoon last November, I met Douglas Feith in his office at the Pentagon to discuss what has happened in Iraq. Feith's title is undersecretary of defense for policy, which places him, along with several other undersecretaries, just below Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and Deputy Secretary Paul Wolfowitz in the Pentagon's hierarchy. Informally he is seen in Washington as "Wolfowitz's Wolfowitz"—that is, as a deputy who has a wide range of responsibilities but is clearly identified with one particular policy. That policy is bringing regime change to Iraq—a goal that both Wolfowitz and Feith strongly advocated through the 1990s. To opponents of the war in Iraq, Feith is one of several shadowy, Rasputinlike figures who are shaping U.S. policy. He is seen much the way enemies of the Clinton Administration saw Hillary Clinton. Others associated with the Bush Administration who are seen this way include the consultant Richard Perle; Lewis "Scooter" Libby, the chief of staff for Vice President Dick Cheney; and the Vice President himself. What these officials have in common is their presumably great private influence and—even in the case of the Vice President—their limited public visibility and accountability.

In person Douglas Feith is nothing like Rasputin. Between a Reagan-era stint in the Pentagon and his current job he was a Washington lawyer for fifteen years, and he answered my questions with a lawyer's affability in the face of presumed disagreement. I could be biased in Feith's favor, because he was the most senior Administration official who granted my request for an interview about postwar Iraq. Like Donald Rumsfeld, Feith acts and sounds younger than many others of his age (fifty). But distinctly unlike Rumsfeld at a press conference, Feith in this interview did not seem at all arrogant or testy. His replies were relatively candid and unforced, in contrast to the angry or relentlessly on-message responses that have become standard from senior Administration officials. He acknowledged what was "becoming the conventional wisdom" about the Administration's failure to plan adequately for events after the fall of Baghdad, and then explained—with animation, dramatic pauses, and gestures—why he thought it was wrong.

Feith offered a number of specific illustrations of what he considered underappreciated successes. Some were familiar—the oil wells weren't on fire, Iraqis didn't starve or flee—but others were less so. For instance, he described the Administration's careful effort to replace old Iraqi dinars, which carried Saddam Hussein's image ("It's interesting how important that is, and it ties into the whole issue of whether people think that Saddam might be coming back"), with a new form of currency, without causing a run on the currency.

But mainly he challenged the premise of most critics: that the Administration could have done a better job of preparing for the consequences of victory. When I asked what had gone better than expected, and what had gone worse, he said, "We don't exactly deal in 'expectations.' Expectations are too close to 'predictions.' We're not comfortable with predictions. It is one of the big strategic premises of the work that we do."

The limits of future knowledge, Feith said, were of special importance to Rumsfeld, "who is death to predictions." "His big strategic theme is uncertainty," Feith said. "The need to deal strategically with uncertainty. The inability to predict the future. The limits on our knowledge and the limits on our intelligence."

In practice, Feith said, this meant being ready for whatever proved to be the situation in postwar Iraq. "You will not find a single piece of paper ... If anybody ever went through all of our records—and someday some people will, presumably—nobody will find a single piece of paper that says, 'Mr. Secretary or Mr. President, let us tell you what postwar Iraq is going to look like, and here is what we need plans for.' If you tried that, you would get thrown out of Rumsfeld's office so fast—if you ever went in there and said, 'Let me tell you what something's going to look like in the future,' you wouldn't get to your next sentence!"

"This is an important point," he said, "because of this issue of What did we believe? ... The common line is, nobody planned for security because Ahmed Chalabi told us that everything was going to be swell." Chalabi, the exiled leader of the Iraqi National Congress, has often been blamed for making rosy predictions about the ease of governing postwar Iraq. "So we predicted that everything was going to be swell, and we didn't plan for things *not* being swell." Here Feith paused for a few seconds, raised his hands with both palms up, and put on a "Can you believe it?" expression. "I mean—one would really have to be a *simpleton*. And whatever people think of me, how can anybody think that Don Rumsfeld is that dumb? He's so evidently *not* that dumb, that how can people write things like that?" He sounded amazed rather than angry.

No one contends that Donald Rumsfeld, or Paul Wolfowitz, or Douglas Feith, or the Administration as a whole is dumb. The wisdom of their preparations for the aftermath of military victory in Iraq is the question.

James Fallows is a national correspondent for The Atlantic. *His* Atlantic *cover story "The Fifty-first State?" (November 2002), about postwar Iraq, won the National Magazine Award for Public Interest.*

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Feith's argument was a less defensive-sounding version of the Administration's general response to criticisms of its postwar policy: Life is uncertain, especially when the lid comes off a long-tyrannized society. American planners did about as well as anyone could in preparing for the unforeseeable. Anyone who says otherwise is indulging in lazy, unfair second-guessing. "The notion that there was a memo that was once written, that if we had only listened to that memo, all would be well in Iraq, is *so* preposterous," Feith told me.

The notion of a single memo's changing history is indeed farfetched. The idea that a substantial body of knowledge could have improved postwar prospects is not. The Administration could not have known everything about what it would find in Iraq. But it could have—and should have—done far more than it did.

Almost everything, good and bad, that has happened in Iraq since the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime was the subject of extensive pre-war discussion and analysis. This is particularly true of what have proved to be the harshest realities for the United States since the fall of Baghdad: that occupying the country is much more difficult than conquering it; that a breakdown in public order can jeopardize every other goal; that the ambition of patiently nurturing a new democracy is at odds with the desire to turn control over to the Iraqis quickly and get U.S. troops out; that the Sunni center of the country is the main security problem; that with each passing day Americans risk being seen less as liberators and more as occupiers, and targets.

All this, and much more, was laid out in detail and in writing long before the U.S. government made the final decision to attack. Even now the collective efforts at planning by the CIA, the State Department, the Army and the Marine Corps, the United States Agency for International Development, and a wide variety of other groups inside and outside the government are underappreciated by the public. The one pre-war effort that has received substantial recent attention, the State Department's Future of Iraq project, produced thousands of pages of findings, barely one paragraph of which has until now been quoted in the press. The Administration will be admired in retrospect for how much knowledge it created about the challenge it was taking on. U.S. government predictions about postwar Iraq's problems have proved as accurate as the assessments of pre-war Iraq's strategic threat have proved flawed.

But the Administration will be condemned for what it did with what was known. The problems the United States has encountered are precisely the ones its own expert agencies warned against. Exactly what went wrong with the occupation will be studied for years—or should be. The missteps of the first half year in Iraq are as significant as other classic and carefully examined failures in foreign policy, including John Kennedy's handling of the Bay of Pigs invasion, in 1961, and Lyndon Johnson's decision to escalate U.S. involvement in Vietnam, in 1965. The United States withstood those previous failures, and it will withstand this one. Having taken over Iraq and captured Saddam Hussein, it has no moral or practical choice other than to see out the occupation and to help rebuild and democratize the country. But its missteps have come at a heavy cost. And the ongoing financial, diplomatic, and human cost of the Iraq occupation is the more grievous in light of advance warnings the government had.

The United States will be condemned for ignoring what was known about the challenges of postwar Iraq. The problems it encountered are precisely the ones U.S. expert agencies warned against.

BEFORE SEPTEMBER 11, 2001: THE EARLY DAYS

Concern about Saddam Hussein pre-dated the 9/11 attacks and even the inauguration of George W. Bush. In 1998 Congress passed and President Bill Clinton signed the Iraq Liberation Act, which declared that "it should be the policy of the United States to support efforts to remove the regime headed by Saddam Hussein from power." During the 2000 presidential campaign Al Gore promised to support groups working to unseat Saddam Hussein. In the week before Bush took office, Nicholas Lemann reported in *The New Yorker* that "the idea of overthrowing Saddam is not an idle fantasy—or, if it is, it's one that has lately occupied the minds of many American officials, including people close to George W. Bush." But the intellectual case for regime change, argued during the Clinton years by some Democrats and notably by Paul Wolfowitz, then the dean of the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, shifted clearly toward operational planning after the destruction of the World Trade Center.

For much of the public this case for war against Iraq rested on an assumed connection (though this was never demonstrated, and was officially disavowed by the President) between Saddam Hussein's regime and the terrorist hijackers. Within the government the case was equally compelling but different. September 11 had shown that the United States was newly vulnerable; to protect itself it had to fight terrorists at their source; and because Saddam Hussein's regime was the leading potential source of future "state-sponsored" terrorism, it had become an active threat, whether or not it played any role in 9/11. The very next day, September 12, 2001, James Woolsey, who had been Clinton's first CIA director, told me that no matter who proved to be responsible for this attack, the solution had to

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include removing Saddam Hussein, because he was so likely to be involved next time. A military planner inside the Pentagon later told me that on September 13 his group was asked to draw up scenarios for an assault on Iraq, not just Afghanistan.

Soon after becoming the Army Chief of Staff, in 1999, General Eric Shinseki had begun ordering war-game exercises to judge strategies and manpower needs for possible combat in Iraq. This was not because he assumed a war was imminent. He thought that the greater Caspian Sea region, including Iraq, would present a uniquely difficult challenge for U.S. troops, because of its geography and political tensions. After 9/11, Army war games involving Iraq began in earnest.

In his first State of the Union address, on January 29, 2002, President Bush said that Iraq, Iran, and North Korea were an "axis of evil" that threatened world peace. "By seeking weapons of mass destruction, these regimes pose a grave and growing danger. They could provide these arms to terrorists, giving them the means to match their hatred. They could attack our allies or attempt to blackmail the United States."

By the time of this speech efforts were afoot not simply to remove Saddam Hussein but also to imagine what Iraq would be like when he was gone. In late October of 2001, while the U.S. military was conducting its rout of the Taliban from Afghanistan, the State Department had quietly begun its planning for the aftermath of a "transition" in Iraq. At about the time of the "axis of evil" speech, working groups within the department were putting together a list of postwar jobs and topics to be considered, and possible groups of experts to work on them.

ONE YEAR BEFORE THE WAR: THE "FUTURE OF IRAQ"

Thus was born the Future of Iraq project, whose existence is by now well known, but whose findings and potential impact have rarely been reported and examined. The State Department first publicly mentioned the project in March of 2002, when it quietly announced the lineup of the working groups. At the time, media attention was overwhelmingly directed toward Afghanistan, where Operation Anaconda, the half-successful effort to kill or capture al-Qaeda and Taliban fighters, was under way.

For several months before announcing the project the State Department had been attempting to coordinate the efforts of the many fractious Iraqi exile organizations. The Future of Iraq project held the potential for harnessing, and perhaps even harmonizing, the expertise available from the exile groups.

It was also in keeping with a surprisingly well established U.S. government tradition of preparing for postwar duties before there was a clear idea of when fighting would begin, let alone when it would end. Before the United States entered World War II, teams at the Army War College were studying what went right and wrong when American doughboys occupied Germany after World War I. Within months of the attack on Pearl Harbor a School of Military Government had been created, at the University of Virginia, to plan for the occupation of both Germany and Japan. In 1995, while U.S. negotiators, led by Richard Holbrooke, were still working at the Dayton peace talks to end the war in the Balkans, World Bank representatives were on hand to arrange loans for the new regimes.

Contemplating postwar plans posed a problem for those who, like many in the State Department, were skeptical of the need for war. Were they making a war more likely if they prepared for its aftermath? Thomas Warrick, the State Department official who directed the Future of Iraq project, was considered to be in the antiwar camp. But according to associates, he explained the importance of preparing for war by saying, "I'm nervous that they're actually going to do it—and the day after they'll turn to us and ask, 'Now what?'" So he pushed ahead with the project, setting up numerous conferences and drafting sessions that would bring together teams of exiles—among them Kanan Makiya, the author of the influential anti-Saddam book *Republic of Fear*, first published in 1989. A small number of "international advisers," mainly from the United States, were also assigned to the teams. Eventually there would be seventeen working groups, designed systematically to cover what would be needed to rebuild the political and economic infrastructure of the country. "Democratic Principles and Procedures" was the name of one of the groups, which was assigned to suggest the legal framework for a new government; Makiya would write much of its report. The "Transitional Justice" group was supposed to work on reparations, amnesty, and de-Baathification laws. Groups studying economic matters included "Public Finance," "Oil and Energy," and "Water, Agriculture and Environment."

In May of 2002 Congress authorized $5 million to fund the project's studies. In the flurry of news from Afghanistan the project went unnoticed in the press until June, when the State Department announced that the first meetings would take place in July. "The role of the U.S. government and State Department is to see what the Iraqis and Iraqi-Americans want," Warrick said at a conference on June 1, 2002. "The impetus for change comes from [Iraqis], not us. This is the job of Iraqis inside and outside."

That same day President Bush delivered a graduation speech at West Point, giving a first look at the doctrine of pre-emptive war. He told the cadets, to cheers, "Our security will require all Americans to be forward-looking and resolute, to be ready for pre-emptive action when necessary to defend our liberty and to defend our lives." Later in the summer the doctrine was elaborated in a new National Security Strategy, which explained that since "rogue states" could not be contained or deterred, they needed to be destroyed before they could attack.

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Whenever National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice was interviewed that summer, she talked mainly about the thinking behind the new policy. When Vice President Dick Cheney was interviewed, he talked mainly about Saddam Hussein's defiance of international law. But when Secretary of State Colin Powell was interviewed, he constantly stressed the value of an international approach to the problem and the need to give UN arms inspectors adequate time to do their job.

War with Iraq was not inevitable at this point, but it seemed more and more likely. Daily conversation in Washington, which usually reverts to "So, who do you think will be the next President?," switched instead to "So, when do you think we're going to war?"

It was in these circumstances that the Future of Iraq project's working groups deliberated. Most of the meetings were in Washington. Some were in London, and one session, in early September, took place in Surrey, where representatives of a dozen mutually suspicious exile groups discussed prospects for democratic coexistence when Saddam Hussein was gone. (Along with Chalabi's INC the meeting included several rival Kurdish groups, Assyrian and Turkomen organizations, the Iraqi Constitutional Monarchy Movement, and others.)

The project did not overcome all the tensions among its members, and the results of its deliberations were uneven. Three of its intended working groups never actually met—including, ominously, "Preserving Iraq's Cultural Heritage." The "Education" group finally produced a report only six pages long, in contrast to many hundreds of pages from most others. Some recommendations were quirky or reflected the tastes of the individual participants who drafted them. A report titled "Free Media" proposed that all Iraqi journalists be taken out of the country for a month-long re-education process: "Those who 'get it' go back as reporters; others would be retired or reassigned." A group that was considering ways of informing Iraq about the realities of democracy mentioned *Baywatch* and *Leave It to Beaver* as information sources that had given Iraqis an imprecise understanding of American society. It recommended that a new film, *Colonial America: Life in a Theocracy*, be shot, noting, "The Puritan experiments provide amazing parallels with current Moslem fundamentalism. The ultimate failures of these US experiments can also be vividly illustrated—witch trials, intolerance, etc."

But whatever may have been unrealistic or factional about these efforts, even more of what the project created was impressive. The final report consisted of thirteen volumes of recommendations on specific topics, plus a one-volume summary and overview. These I have read—and I read them several months into the occupation, when it was unfairly easy to judge how well the forecast was standing up. (Several hundred of the 2,500 pages were in Arabic, which sped up the reading process.) The report was labeled "For Official Use Only"—an administrative term that implies confidentiality but has no legal significance. The State Department held the report closely until, last fall, it agreed to congressional requests to turn over the findings.

Most of the project's judgments look good in retrospect—and virtually all reveal a touching earnestness about working out the details of reconstructing a society. For instance, one of the thickest volumes considered the corruption endemic in Iraqi life and laid out strategies for coping with it. (These included a new "Iraqi Government Code of Ethics," which began, "Honesty, integrity, and fairness are the fundamental values for the people of Iraq.") The overview volume, which appears to have been composed as a series of PowerPoint charts, said that the United States was undertaking this effort because, among other things, "detailed public planning" conveys U.S. government "seriousness" and the message that the U.S. government "wants to learn from past regime change experiences."

For their part, the Iraqi participants emphasized several points that ran through all the working groups' reports. A recurring theme was the urgency of restoring electricity and water supplies as soon as possible after regime change. The first item in the list of recommendations from the "Water, Agriculture and Environment" group read, "Fundamental importance of clean water supplies for Iraqis immediately after transition. Key to coalition/community relations." One of the groups making economic recommendations wrote, "Stressed importance of getting electrical grid up and running immediately—key to water systems, jobs. Could go a long way to determining Iraqis' attitudes toward Coalition forces."

A second theme was the need to plan carefully for the handling and demobilization of Iraq's very sizable military. On the one hand, a functioning army would be necessary for public order and, once coalition forces withdrew, for the country's defense. ("Our vision of the future is to build a democratic civil society. In order to make this vision a reality, we need to have an army that can work alongside this new society.") On the other hand, a large number of Saddam's henchmen would have to be removed. The trick would be to get rid of the leaders without needlessly alienating the ordinary troops—or leaving them without income. One group wrote, "All combatants who are included in the demobilization process must be assured by their leaders and the new government of their legal rights and that new prospects for work and education will be provided by the

Because detailed planning for the postwar situation meant facing costs and potential problems, it weakened the case for a "war of choice," and was seen by the war's proponents as an "antiwar" undertaking.

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new system." Toward this end it laid out a series of steps the occupation authorities should take in the "disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration" process. Another group, in a paper on democratic principles, warned, "The decommissioning of hundreds of thousands of trained military personnel that [a rapid purge] implies could create social problems."

Next the working groups emphasized how disorderly Iraq would be soon after liberation, and how difficult it would be to get the country on the path to democracy—though that was where it had to go. "The removal of Saddam's regime will provide a power vacuum and create popular anxieties about the viability of all Iraqi institutions," a paper on rebuilding civil society said. "The traumatic and disruptive events attendant to the regime change will affect all Iraqis, both Saddam's conspirators and the general populace." Another report warned more explicitly that "the period immediately after regime change might offer these criminals the opportunity to engage in acts of killing, plunder and looting." In the short term the occupying forces would have to prevent disorder. In the long term, according to a report written by Kanan Makiya, they would need to recognize that "the extent of the Iraqi totalitarian state, its absolute power and control exercised from Baghdad, not to mention the terror used to enforce compliance, cannot be overestimated in their impact on the Iraqi psyche and the attendant feeling of fear, weakness, and shame." Makiya continued, "These conditions and circumstances do not provide a strong foundation on which to build new institutions and a modern nation state."

Each of the preceding themes would seem to imply a long, difficult U.S. commitment in Iraq. America should view its involvement in Iraq, the summary report said, not as it had Afghanistan, which was left to stew in lightly supervised warlordism, but as it had Germany and Japan, which were rebuilt over many years. But nearly every working group stressed one other point: the military occupation itself had to be brief. "Note: Military government idea did not go down well," one chart in the summary volume said. The "Oil and Energy" group presented a "key concept": "Iraqis do not work for American contractors; Americans are seen assisting Iraqis."

Americans are often irritated by the illogic of "resentful dependence" by weaker states. South Koreans, for example, complain bitterly about U.S. soldiers in their country but would complain all the more bitterly if the soldiers were removed. The authors of the Future of Iraq report could by those standards also be accused of illogical thinking, in wanting U.S. support but not wanting U.S. control. Moreover, many of the project's members had a bias that prefigured an important source of postwar tension: they were exiles who considered themselves the likeliest beneficiaries if the United States transferred power to Iraqis quickly—even though, precisely because of their exile, they had no obvious base of support within Iraq.

To skip ahead in the story: As chaos increased in Baghdad last summer, the chief U.S. administrator, L. Paul "Jerry" Bremer, wrestled constantly with a variant of this exile paradox. The Iraqi Governing Council, whose twenty-five members were chosen by Americans, was supposed to do only the preparatory work for an elected Iraqi government. But the greater the pressure on Bremer for "Iraqification," the more tempted he was to give in to the council's demand that he simply put it in charge without waiting for an election. More than a year earlier, long before combat began, the explicit recommendations and implicit lessons of the Future of Iraq project had given the U.S. government a very good idea of what political conflicts it could expect in Iraq.

TEN MONTHS BEFORE THE WAR: WAR GAMES AND WARNINGS

As combat slowed in Afghanistan and the teams of the Future of Iraq project continued their deliberations, the U.S. government put itself on a wartime footing. In late May the CIA had begun what would become a long series of war-game exercises, to think through the best- and worst-case scenarios after the overthrow of Saddam Hussein. According to a person familiar with the process, one recurring theme in the exercises was the risk of civil disorder after the fall of Baghdad. The exercises explored how to find and secure the weapons of mass destruction that were then assumed to be in and around Baghdad, and indicated that the hardest task would be finding and protecting scientists who knew about the weapons before they could be killed by the regime as it was going down.

The CIA also considered whether a new Iraqi government could be put together through a process like the Bonn conference, which was then being used to devise a post-Taliban regime for Afghanistan. At the Bonn conference representatives of rival political and ethic groups agreed on the terms that established Hamid Karzai as the new Afghan President. The CIA believed that rivalries in Iraq were so deep, and the political culture so shallow, that a similarly quick transfer of sovereignty would only invite chaos.

Representatives from the Defense Department were among those who participated in the first of these CIA war-game sessions. When their Pentagon superiors at the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) found out about this, in early summer, the representatives were reprimanded and told not to participate further. "OSD" is Washington shorthand, used frequently in discussions about the origins of Iraq war plans, and it usually refers to strong guidance from Rumsfeld, Wolfowitz, Feith, and one of Feith's deputies, William Luti. Their displeasure over the CIA exercise was an early illustration of a view that became stronger throughout 2002: that postwar planning was an impediment to war.

Because detailed thought about the postwar situation meant facing costs and potential problems, and thus weakened the case for launching a "war of choice" (the Washington

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term for a war not waged in immediate self-defense), it could be seen as an "antiwar" undertaking. The knowledge that U.S. soldiers would still be in Germany and Japan sixty-plus years after Pearl Harbor would obviously not have changed the decision to enter World War II, and in theory the Bush Administration could have presented the overthrow of Saddam Hussein in a similar way: as a job that had to be done, even though it might saddle Americans with costs and a military presence for decades to come. Everyone can think of moments when Bush or Rumsfeld has reminded the nation that this would be a long-term challenge. But during the months when the Administration was making its case for the war—successfully to Congress, less so to the United Nations—it acted as if the long run should be thought about only later on.

On July 31, 2002, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee invited a panel of experts to discuss the case for war against Iraq. On August 1 it heard from other experts about the likely "day after" consequences of military victory. Senator Joseph Biden, a Democrat from Delaware, was then the chairman of the committee. That first day Biden said that the threat of WMD might force him to vote in favor of the war (as he ultimately did). But he worried that if the United States invaded without full allied support, "we may very well radicalize the rest of the world, we may pick up a bill that's $70 billion, $80 billion, we may have to have extensive commitment of U.S. forces for an extended period of time in Iraq."

Phebe Marr, an Iraq scholar retired from the National Defense University, told the committee that the United States "should assume that it cannot get the results it wants on the cheap" from regime change. "It must be prepared to put some troops on the ground, advisers to help create new institutions, and above all, time and effort in the future to see the project through to a satisfactory end. If the United States is not willing to do so, it had best rethink the project." Rend Rahim Francke, an Iraqi exile serving on the Future of Iraq project (and now the ambassador from Iraq to the United States), said that "the system of public security will break down, because there will be no functioning police force, no civil service, and no justice system" on the first day after the fighting. "There will be a vacuum of political authority and administrative authority," she said. "The infrastructure of vital sectors will have to be restored. An adequate police force must be trained and equipped as quickly as possible. And the economy will have to be jump-started from not only stagnation but devastation." Other witnesses discussed the need to commit U.S. troops for many years—but to begin turning constitutional authority over to the Iraqis within six months. The upshot of the hearings was an emphasis on the short-term importance of security, the medium-term challenge of maintaining control while transferring sovereignty to the Iraqis, and the long-term reality of commitments and costs. All the experts agreed that what came after the fall of Baghdad would be harder for the United States than what came before.

SIX MONTHS BEFORE THE WAR: GETTING SERIOUS

One week before Labor Day, while President Bush was at his ranch in Texas, Vice President Cheney gave a speech at a Veterans of Foreign Wars convention in Nashville. "There is no doubt that Saddam Hussein now has weapons of mass destruction [and that he will use them] against our friends, against our allies, and against us," Cheney said. Time was running out, he concluded, for America to remove this threat. A few days later CNN quoted a source "intimately familiar with [Colin] Powell's thinking" as saying that Powell was still insistent on the need for allied support and would oppose any war in which the United States would "go it alone ... as if it doesn't give a damn" about other nations' views. Just after Labor Day, Powell apparently won a battle inside the Administration and persuaded Bush to take the U.S. case to the United Nations. On September 12 Bush addressed the UN General Assembly and urged it to insist on Iraqi compliance with its previous resolutions concerning disarmament.

Before the war the Administration exercised remarkable "message discipline" about financial projections. When asked how much the war might cost, officials said that so many things were uncertain, starting with whether there would even be a war, that there was no responsible way to make an estimate. In part this reflected Rumsfeld's emphasis on the unknowability of the future. It was also politically essential, in delaying the time when the Administration had to argue that

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IF ONLY

Their cottage sat on a grassy bluff
weathered by salt spray, fogs, and rain
blowing off dunes and bleached logpiles
past tidal creeks seeping out to sea.

Cattails bobbed with red-wing blackbirds.
Sparrows clamored through wild-rose thickets.
Two dogs, spattered with sandy muck,
snoozed on the sunny porch steps.

Dinner simmered on the stove.
Pulling weeds in the garden, she smiled,
hearing his tires pop gravel and clamshells
at their rutted lane's long winding end.

The dogs leapt up, loped out to greet him.
This is how it should have been.

—JOHN BALABAN

John Balaban is a poet and translator whose books include Locusts at the Edge of Summer: New and Selected Poems *(1998) and* Ca Dao Vietnam: Vietnamese Folk Poetry *(2003).*

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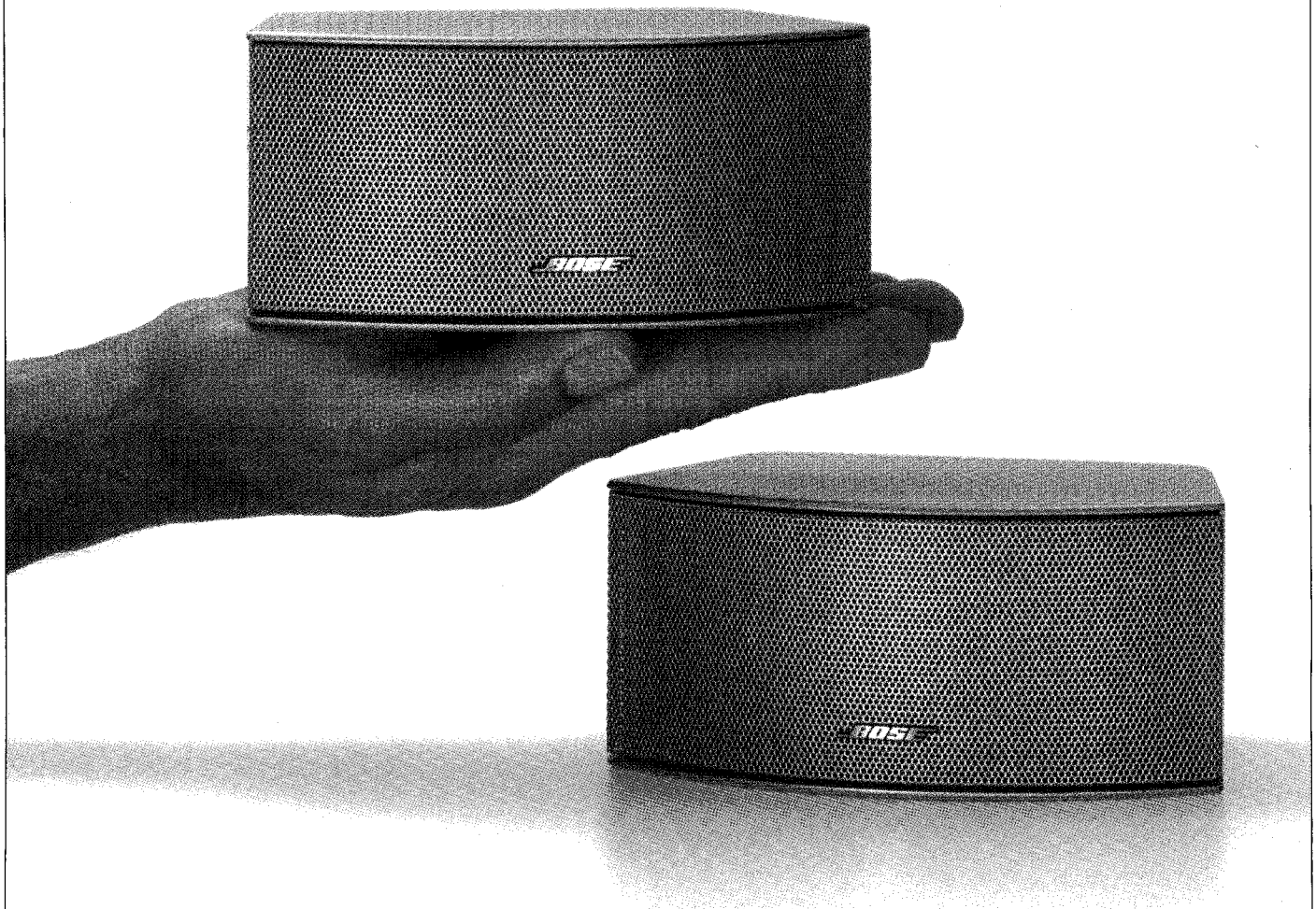

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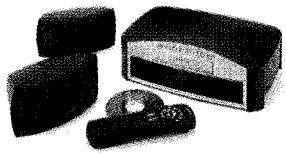

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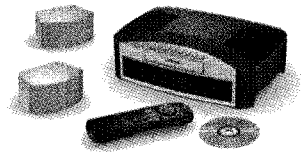

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regime change in Iraq was worth a specific number of billions of dollars.

In September, Lawrence Lindsay, then the chief White House economic adviser, broke discipline. He was asked by *The Wall Street Journal* how much a war and its aftermath might cost. He replied that it might end up at one to two percent of the gross domestic product, which would mean $100 billion to $200 billion. Lindsay added that he thought the cost of not going to war could conceivably be greater—but that didn't placate his critics within the Administration. The Administration was further annoyed by a report a few days later from Democrats on the House Budget Committee, which estimated the cost of the war at $48 billion to $93 billion. Lindsay was widely criticized in "background" comments from Administration officials, and by the end of the year he had been forced to resign. His comment "made it clear Larry just didn't get it," an unnamed Administration official told *The Washington Post* when Lindsay left. Lindsay's example could hardly have encouraged others in the Administration to be forthcoming with financial projections. Indeed, no one who remained in the Administration offered a plausible cost estimate until months after the war began.

In September the United States Agency for International Development began to think in earnest about its postwar responsibilities in Iraq. It was the natural contact for nongovernmental organizations, or NGOs, from the United States and other countries that were concerned with relief efforts in Iraq.

USAID's administrator, Andrew Natsios, came to the assignment with a complex set of experiences and instincts. He started his career, in the 1970s, as a Republican state legislator in Massachusetts, and before the Bush Administration he had been the administrator of the state's "Big Dig," the largest public-works effort ever in the country. Before the Big Dig, Natsios spent five years as an executive at a major humanitarian NGO called World Vision. He also served in the Persian Gulf during the 1991 Gulf War, as an Army Reserve officer. By background he was the Administration official best prepared to anticipate the combination of wartime and postwar obligations in Iraq.

At any given moment USAID is drawing up contingency plans for countries that might soon need help. "I actually have a list, which I will not show you," Natsios told me in the fall, "of countries where there may not be American troops soon, but they could fall apart—and if they do, what we could do for them." By mid-September of 2002, six months before the official beginning of Operation Iraqi Freedom, Natsios had additional teams working on plans for Iraq. Representatives of about a dozen relief organizations and NGOs were gathering each week at USAID headquarters for routine coordination meetings. Iraq occupied more and more of their time through 2002. On October 10, one day before Congress voted to authorize the war, the meetings were recast as the Iraq Working Group.

All the government working groups concluded that occupying Iraq would be far more difficult than defeating it. Wolfowitz either didn't notice this evidence or chose to disbelieve it.

FIVE MONTHS BEFORE THE WAR: OCCUPIERS OR LIBERATORS?

The weekly meetings at USAID quickly settled into a pattern. The representatives of the NGOs would say, "We've dealt with situations like this before, and we know what to expect." The U.S. government representatives would either say nothing or else reply, No, this time it will be different.

The NGOs had experience dealing with a reality that has not fully sunk in for most of the American public. In the nearly three decades since U.S. troops left Vietnam, the American military has fought only two wars as most people understand the term: the two against Saddam Hussein's Iraq. But through the past thirty years U.S. troops have almost continuously been involved in combat somewhere. Because those engagements—in Grenada, Lebanon, Panama, Haiti, Somalia, Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan, and elsewhere—have no obvious connection with one another, politicians and the public usually discuss them as stand-alone cases. Each one seems an aberration from the "real" wars the military is set up to fight.

To the NGO world, these and other modern wars (like the ones in Africa) are not the exception but the new norm: brutal localized encounters that destroy the existing political order and create a need for long-term international supervision and support. Within the U.S. military almost no one welcomes this reality, but many recognize that peacekeeping, policing, and, yes, nation-building are now the expected military tasks. The military has gotten used to working alongside the NGOs—and the NGOs were ready with a checklist of things to worry about once the regime had fallen.

An even larger question about historical precedent began to surface. When Administration officials talked about models for what would happen in Iraq, they almost always referred to the lasting success in Japan and Germany—or else to countries of the former Soviet bloc in Eastern Europe. (A civilian adviser who went to Baghdad early in the occupation recalls looking at his fellow passengers on the military transport plane. The ones who weren't asleep or flipping through magazines were reading books about Japan or Germany, not about the Arab world. "That was not a good sign," he told me.) If one thought of Iraq as Poland, or as the former East Germany, or as the former Czechoslo-

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vakia, or as almost any part of the onetime Soviet empire in Eastern Europe other than Romania, one would naturally conclude that regime change in itself would set the country well along the path toward recovery. These countries were fine once their repressive leaders were removed; so might Iraq well be. And if the former Yugoslavia indicated darker possibilities, that could be explained as yet another failure of Clinton-era foreign policy.

Many NGO representatives assumed that postwar recovery would not be so automatic, and that they should begin working on preparations before the combat began. "At the beginning our main message was the need for access," I was told by Sandra Mitchell, the vice-president of the International Rescue Committee, who attended the USAID meetings. Because of U.S. sanctions against Iraq, it was illegal for American humanitarian organizations to operate there. (Journalists were about the only category of Americans who would not get in trouble with their own government by traveling to and spending money in Iraq.) "Our initial messages were like those in any potential crisis situation," Mitchell said, "but the reason we were so insistent in this case was the precarious situation that already existed in Iraq. The internal infrastructure was shot, and you couldn't easily swing in resources from neighboring countries, like in the Balkans." The NGOs therefore asked, as a first step, for a presidential directive exempting them from the sanctions. They were told to expect an answer to this request by December. That deadline passed with no ruling. By early last year the NGOs felt that it was too dangerous to go to Iraq, and the Administration feared that if they went they might be used as hostages. No directive was ever issued.

Through the fall and winter of 2002 the International Rescue Committee, Refugees International, InterAction, and other groups that met with USAID kept warning about one likely postwar problem that, as it turned out, Iraq avoided—a mass flow of refugees—and another that was exactly as bad as everyone warned: the lawlessness and looting of the "day after" in Baghdad. The Bush Administration would later point to the absence of refugees as a sign of the occupation's underreported success. This achievement was, indeed, due in part to a success: the speed and precision of the military campaign itself. But the absence of refugees was also a sign of a profound failure: the mistaken estimates of Iraq's WMD threat. All pre-war scenarios involving huge movements of refugees began with the assumption that Saddam Hussein would use chemical or biological weapons against U.S. troops or his own Kurdish or Shiite populations—and that either the fact or the fear of such assaults would force terrified Iraqis to evacuate.

The power vacuum that led to looting was disastrous. "The looting was not a surprise," Sandra Mitchell told me. "It should not have come as a surprise. Anyone who has witnessed the fall of a regime while another force is coming in on a temporary basis knows that looting is standard procedure. In Iraq there were very strong signals that this could be the period of greatest concern for humanitarian response." One lesson of postwar reconstruction through the 1990s was that even a short period of disorder could have long-lasting effects.

The meetings at USAID gave the veterans of international relief operations a way to register their concerns. The problem was that they heard so little back. "The people in front of us were very well-meaning," says Joel Charny, who represented Refugees International at the meetings. "And in fairness, they were on such a short leash. But the dialogue was one-way. We would tell them stuff, and they would nod and say, Everything's under control. To me it was like the old four-corners offense in basketball. They were there to just dribble out the clock but be able to say they'd consulted with us."

And again the question arose of whether what lay ahead in Iraq would be similar to the other "small wars" of the previous decade-plus or something new. If it was similar, the NGOs had their checklists ready. These included, significantly, the obligations placed on any "occupying power" by the Fourth Geneva Convention, which was signed in 1949 and is mainly a commonsense list of duties—from protecting hospitals to minimizing postwar reprisals—that a victorious army must carry out. "But we were corrected when we raised this point," Sandra Mitchell says. "The American troops would be 'liberators' rather than 'occupiers,' so the obligations did not apply. Our point was not to pass judgment on the military action but to describe the responsibilities."

In the same mid-October week that the Senate approved the war resolution, a team from the Strategic Studies Institute at the Army War College, in Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, began a postwar-planning exercise. Even more explicitly than the NGOs, the Army team insisted that America's military past, reaching back to its conquest of the Philippines, in 1898, would be a useful guide to its future duties in Iraq. As a rule, professional soldiers spend more time thinking and talking about history than other people do; past battles are the only real evidence about doctrine and equipment. The institute—in essence, the War College's think tank—was charged with reviewing recent occupations to help the Army "best address the requirements that will necessarily follow operational victory in a war with Iraq," as the institute's director later said in a foreword to the team's report. "As the possibility of war with Iraq looms on the horizon, it is important to look beyond the conflict to the challenges of occupying the country."

The study's principal authors were Conrad Crane, who graduated from West Point in the early 1970s and taught there as a history professor through the 1990s, and Andrew Terrill, an Army Reserve officer and a strategic-studies professor.

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With a team of other researchers, which included representatives from the Army and the joint staff as well as other government agencies and think tanks, they began high-speed work on a set of detailed recommendations about postwar priorities. The Army War College report was also connected to a pre-war struggle with yet another profound postwar consequence: the fight within the Pentagon, between the civilian leadership in OSD and the generals running the Army, over the size and composition of the force that would conquer Iraq.

FOUR MONTHS BEFORE THE WAR: THE BATTLE IN THE PENTAGON

On November 5, 2002, the Republicans regained control of the Senate and increased their majority in the House in national midterm elections. On November 8 the UN Security Council voted 15–0 in favor of Resolution 1441, threatening Iraq with "serious consequences" if it could not prove that it had abandoned its weapons programs.

Just before 9/11 Donald Rumsfeld had been thought of as standing on a banana peel. The newspapers were full of leaked anonymous complaints from military officials who thought that his efforts to streamline and "transform" the Pentagon were unrealistic and damaging. But with his dramatic metamorphosis from embattled Secretary of Defense to triumphant Secretary of War, Rumsfeld's reputation outside the Administration and his influence within it rose. He was operating from a position of great power when, in November, he decided to "cut the TPFDD."

"*Tipfid*" is how people in the military pronounce the acronym for "time-phased force and deployment data," but what it really means to the armed forces, in particular the Army, is a way of doing business that is methodical, careful, and sure. The TPFDD for Iraq was an unbelievably complex master plan governing which forces would go where, when, and with what equipment, on which planes or ships, so that everything would be coordinated and ready at the time of attack. One reason it took the military six months to get set for each of its wars against Iraq, a comparatively pitiful foe, was the thoroughness of TPFDD planning. To its supporters, this approach is old-school in the best sense: if you fight, you really fight. To its detractors, this approach is simply old—ponderous, inefficient, and, although they don't dare call it cowardly, risk-averse at the least.

A streamlined approach had proved successful in Afghanistan, at least for a while, as a relatively small U.S. force left much of the ground fighting to the Northern Alliance. In the longer run the American strategy created complications for Afghanistan, because the victorious Northern Alliance leaders were newly legitimized as warlords. Donald Rumsfeld was one member of the Administration who seemed still to share the pre-9/11 suspicion about the risks of nation-building, and so didn't much care about the postwar consequences of a relatively small invasion force. (His deputy, Paul Wolfowitz, was more open to the challenge of rebuilding Iraq, but he would never undercut or disobey Rumsfeld.) In November, Rumsfeld began working through the TPFDD, with the goal of paring the force planned for Iraq to its leanest, lightest acceptable level.

The war games run by the Army and the Pentagon's joint staff had led to very high projected troop levels. The Army's recommendation was for an invasion force 400,000 strong, made up of as many Americans as necessary and as many allied troops as possible. "All the numbers we were coming up with were quite large," Thomas White, a retired general (and former Enron executive) who was the Secretary of the Army during the war, told me recently. But Rumsfeld's idea of the right force size was more like 75,000. The Army and the military's joint leadership moderated their requests in putting together the TPFDD, but Rumsfeld began challenging the force numbers in detail. When combat began, slightly more than 200,000 U.S. soldiers were massed around Iraq.

"In what I came to think of as Secretary Rumsfeld's style," an Army official who was involved in the process told me recently, "he didn't directly say no but asked a lot of hard questions about the plan and sent us away without approval. He would ask questions that delayed the activation of units, because he didn't think the planned flow was right. Our people came back with the understanding that their numbers were far too big and they should be thinking more along the lines of Afghanistan"—that is, plan for a light, mobile attack featuring Special Forces soldiers. Another participant described Rumsfeld as looking line by line at the deployments proposed in the TPFDD and saying, "Can't we do this with one company?" or "Shouldn't we get rid of this unit?" Making detailed, last-minute adjustments to the TPFDD was, in the Army's view, like pulling cogs at random out of a machine. According to an observer, "The generals would say, Sir, these changes will ripple back to every railhead and every company."

The longer-term problem involved what would happen after Baghdad fell, as it inevitably would. This was distinctly an Army rather than a general military concern. "Where's the Air Force now?" an Army officer asked rhetorically last fall. "They're back on their bases—and they're better off, since they don't need to patrol the 'no-fly' zones [in northern and southern Iraq, which U.S. warplanes had patrolled since the end of the Gulf War]. The Navy's gone, and most of the Marines have been pulled back. It's the Army holding the sack of shit." A related concern involved what a long-term commitment to Iraq would do to the Army's "ops tempo," or pace of operations—especially if Reserve and National Guard members, who had no expectations of long-term foreign service when they signed up, were posted in Iraq for months or even years.

The military's fundamental argument for building up what Rumsfeld considered a wastefully large force is that it would be even more useful *after* Baghdad fell than during actual combat. The first few days or weeks after the fighting, in this view, were crucial in setting long-term expectations. Civilians

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would see that they could expect a rapid return to order, and would behave accordingly—or they would see the opposite. This was the "shock and awe" that really mattered, in the Army's view: the ability to make clear who was in charge. "Insights from successful occupations suggest that it is best to go in real heavy and then draw down fast," Conrad Crane, of the Army War College, told me. That is, a larger force would be necessary during and immediately after the war, but might mean a much smaller occupation presence six months later.

"We're in Baghdad, the regime is toppled—what's next?" Thomas White told me, recounting discussions before the war. One of the strongest advocates of a larger force was General Eric Shinseki, the Army Chief of Staff. White said, "Guys like Shinseki, who had been in Bosnia [where he supervised the NATO force], been in Kosovo, started running the numbers and said, 'Let's assume the world is linear.' For five million Bosnians we had two hundred thousand people to watch over them. Now we have twenty-five million Iraqis to worry about, spread out over a state the size of California. How many people is this going to take?" The heart of the Army's argument was that with too few soldiers, the United States would win the war only to be trapped in an untenable position during the occupation.

ting troops and high-handed in disregarding the military's professional advice. One man who was then working in the Pentagon told me of walking down a hallway a few months before the war and seeing Army General John Abizaid standing outside a door. Abizaid, who after the war succeeded Tommy Franks as commander of the Central Command, or CENTCOM, was then the director of the Joint Staff—the highest uniformed position in the Pentagon apart from the Joint Chiefs. A planning meeting for Iraq operations was under way. OSD officials told him he could not take part.

The military-civilian difference finally turned on the question of which would be harder: winning the war or maintaining the peace. According to Thomas White and several others, OSD acted as if the war itself would pose the real challenge. As White put it, "The planning assumptions were that the people would realize they were liberated, they would be happy that we were there, so it would take a much smaller force to secure the peace than it did to win the war. The resistance would principally be the remnants of the Baath Party, but they would go away fairly rapidly. And, critically, if we didn't damage the infrastructure in our military operation, as we didn't, the restart of the country could be done fairly rapidly." The first assumption was

The National Intelligence Council, at the CIA, ran a two-day exercise on postwar Iraq. The Office of the Secretary of Defense forbade Pentagon representatives to attend.

A note of personal rancor complicated these discussions, as it did many disagreements over postwar plans. In our interview Douglas Feith played this down—maintaining that press reports had exaggerated the degree of quarreling and division inside the Administration. These reports, he said, mainly reflected the experience of lower-level officials, who were embroiled in one specific policy area and "might find themselves pretty much always at odds with their counterparts from another agency." Higher up, where one might be "fighting with someone on one issue but allied with them on something else," relations were more collegial. Perhaps so. But there was no concealing the hostility within the Pentagon between most uniformed leaders, especially in the Army, and the civilians in OSD.

Donald Rumsfeld viewed Shinseki as a symbol of uncooperative, old-style thinking, and had in the past gone out of his way to humiliate him. In the spring of 2002, fourteen months before the scheduled end of Shinseki's term, Rumsfeld announced who his successor would be; such an announcement, which converts the incumbent into a lame duck, usually comes at the last minute. The action was one of several calculated insults.

From OSD's point of view, Shinseki and many of his colleagues were dragging their feet. From the Army's point of view, OSD was being reckless about the way it was commit-

clearly expressed by Cheney three days before the war began, in an exchange with Tim Russert on *Meet the Press*:

> RUSSERT: If your analysis is not correct, and we're not treated as liberators but as conquerors, and the Iraqis begin to resist, particularly in Baghdad, do you think the American people are prepared for a long, costly, and bloody battle with significant American casualties?
>
> CHENEY: Well, I don't think it's likely to unfold that way, Tim, because I really do believe that we will be greeted as liberators … The read we get on the people of Iraq is there is no question but what they want to get rid of Saddam Hussein and they will welcome as liberators the United States when we come to do that.

Through the 1990s Marine General Anthony Zinni, who preceded Tommy Franks as CENTCOM commander, had done war-gaming for a possible invasion of Iraq. His exercises involved a much larger U.S. force than the one that actually attacked last year. "They were very proud that they didn't have the kind of numbers my plan had called for," Zinni told me, referring to Rumsfeld and Cheney. "The reason we had those two extra divisions was the security situation. Revenge killings, crime, chaos—this was all foreseeable."

Thomas White agrees. Because of reasoning like Cheney's, "we went in with the minimum force to accomplish the military objectives, which was a straightforward task, never

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really in question," he told me. "And then we *immediately* found ourselves shorthanded in the aftermath. We sat there and watched people dismantle and run off with the country, basically."

THREE MONTHS BEFORE THE WAR

In the beginning of December, Iraq submitted its 12,000-page declaration to the UN Security Council contending that it had no remaining WMD stores. Near the end of December, President Bush authorized the dispatch of more than 200,000 U.S. soldiers to the Persian Gulf.

There had still been few or no estimates of the war's cost from the Administration—only contentions that projections like Lawrence Lindsay's were too high. When pressed on this point, Administration officials repeatedly said that with so many uncertainties, they could not possibly estimate the cost. But early in December, just before Lindsay was forced out, *The New York Review of Books* published an article by William Nordhaus titled "Iraq: The Economic Consequences of War," which included carefully considered estimates. Nordhaus, an economist at Yale, had served on Jimmy Carter's Council of Economic Advisers; the article was excerpted from a much longer economic paper he had prepared. His range of estimates was enormous, depending on how long the war lasted and what its impact on the world economy proved to be. Nordhaus calculated that over the course of a decade the direct and indirect costs of the war to the United States could be as low as $121 billion or as high as $1.6 trillion. This was a more thoroughgoing approach than the congressional budget committees had taken, but it was similar in its overall outlook. Nordhaus told me recently that he thinks he should have increased all his estimates to account for the "opportunity costs" of stationing soldiers in Iraq—that is, if they are assigned to Iraq, they're not available for deployment somewhere else.

On the last day of December, Mitch Daniels, the director of the Office of Management and Budget, told *The New York Times* that the war might cost $50 billion to $60 billion. He had to backtrack immediately, his spokesman stressing that "it is impossible to know what any military campaign would ultimately cost." The spokesman explained Daniels's mistake by saying, "The only cost estimate we know of in this arena is the Persian Gulf War, and that was a sixty-billion-dollar event." Daniels would leave the Administration, of his own volition, five months later.

In the immediate run-up to the war the Administration still insisted that the costs were unforeseeable. "Fundamentally, we have no idea what is needed unless and until we get there on the ground," Paul Wolfowitz told the House Budget Committee on February 27, with combat less than three weeks away. "This delicate moment—when we are assembling a coalition, when we are mobilizing people inside Iraq and throughout the region to help us in the event of war, and when we are still trying, through the United Nations and by other means, to achieve a peaceful solution without war—is not a good time to publish highly suspect numerical estimates and have them drive our declaratory policy."

Wolfowitz's stonewalling that day was in keeping with the policy of all senior Administration officials. Until many months after combat had begun, they refused to hazard even the vaguest approximation of what financial costs it might involve. Shinseki, so often at odds with OSD, contemplated taking a different course. He was scheduled to testify, with Thomas White, before the Senate Appropriations Committee on March 19, which turned out to be the first day of actual combat. In a routine prep session before the hearing he asked his assistants what he should say about how much the operations in Iraq were going to cost. "Well, it's impossible to predict," a briefer began, reminding him of the official line.

Shinseki cut him off. "We don't know everything," he said, and then he went through a list of the many things the military already did know. "We know how many troops are there now, and the projected numbers. We know how much it costs to feed them every day. We know how much it cost to send the force there. We know what we have spent already to prepare the force and how much it would cost to bring them back. We have estimates of how much fuel and ammunition we would use per day of operations." In short, anyone who actually wanted to make an estimate had plenty of information on hand.

At this point Jerry Sinn, a three-star general in charge of the Army's budget, said that in fact he had worked up some numbers—and he named a figure, for the Army's likely costs, in the tens of billions of dollars. But when Senator Byron Dorgan, of North Dakota, asked Shinseki at hearings on March 19 how much the war just beginning would cost, Shinseki was loyally vague ("Any potential discussion about what an operation in Iraq or any follow-on probably is undefined at this point").

When Administration officials stopped being vague, they started being unrealistic. On March 27, eight days into combat, members of the House Appropriations Committee asked Paul Wolfowitz for a figure. He told them that whatever it was, Iraq's oil supplies would keep it low. "There's a lot of money to pay for this," he said. "It doesn't have to be U.S. taxpayer money. We are dealing with a country that can really finance its own reconstruction, and relatively soon." On April 23 Andrew Natsios, of USAID, told an incredulous Ted Koppel, on *Nightline*, that the total cost to America of reconstructing Iraq would be $1.7 billion. Koppel shot back, "I mean, when you talk about one-point-seven, you're not suggesting that the rebuilding of Iraq is gonna be done for one-point-seven billion dollars?" Natsios was clear: "Well, in terms of the American taxpayers' contribution, I do; this is it for the U.S. The rest of the rebuilding of Iraq will be done by other countries who have already made pledges ... But the American part of this will be one-point-seven billion dollars. We have no plans for any further-on funding for this." Only in

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September did President Bush make his request for a supplemental appropriation of $87 billion for operations in Iraq.

Planning for the postwar period intensified in December. The Council on Foreign Relations, working with the Baker Institute for Public Policy, at Rice University, convened a working group on "guiding principles for U.S. post-war conflict policy in Iraq." Leslie Gelb, then the president of the Council on Foreign Relations, said that the group would take no position for or against the war. But its report, which was prepared late in January of last year, said that "U.S. and coalition military units will need to pivot quickly from combat to peacekeeping operations in order to prevent post-conflict Iraq from descending into anarchy." The report continued, "Without an initial and broad-based commitment to law and order, the logic of score-settling and revenge-taking will reduce Iraq to chaos."

The momentum toward war put officials at the United Nations and other international organizations in a difficult position. On the one hand, they had to be ready for what was coming; on the other, it was awkward to be seen discussing the impending takeover of one of their member states by another. "Off-the-record meetings were happening in every bar in New York," one senior UN official told me in the fall. An American delegation that included Pentagon representatives went to Rome in December for a confidential meeting with officials of the UN's World Food Programme, to discuss possible food needs after combat in Iraq. As *The Wall Street Journal* later reported, the meeting was uncomfortable for both sides: the Americans had to tell the WFP officials, as one of them recalled, "It is looking most probable you are going to witness one of the largest military engagements since the Second World War." This was hyperbole (Korea? Vietnam?), but it helped to convince the WFP that relief preparations should begin.

On December 11 an ice storm hit the Mid-Atlantic states. For Conrad Crane and his associates at the Army War College, deep in their crash effort to prepare their report on postwar Army challenges, this was a blessing. "The storm worked out perfectly," Crane told me afterward. "We were all on the post, there was no place anyone could go, we basically had the whole place to ourselves."

By the end of the month the War College team had assembled a draft of its report, called "Reconstructing Iraq: Insights, Challenges, and Missions for Military Forces in a Post-Conflict Scenario." It was not classified, and can be found through the Army War College's Web site.

The War College report has three sections. The first is a review of twentieth-century occupations—from the major efforts in Japan and Germany to the smaller and more recent ones in Haiti, Panama, and the Balkans. The purpose of the review is to identify common situations that occupiers might face in Iraq. The discussion of Germany, for instance, includes a detailed account of how U.S. occupiers "de-Nazified" the country without totally dismantling its bureaucracy or excluding everyone who had held a position of responsibility. (The main tool was a *Fragebogen*, or questionnaire, about each person's past activities, which groups of anti-Nazi Germans and Allied investigators reviewed and based decisions on.)

The second section of the report is an assessment of the specific problems likely to arise in Iraq, given its ethnic and regional tensions and the impact of decades of Baathist rule. Most Iraqis would welcome the end of Saddam Hussein's tyranny, it said. Nonetheless,

> Long-term gratitude is unlikely and suspicion of U.S. motives will increase as the occupation continues. A force initially viewed as liberators can rapidly be relegated to the status of invaders should an unwelcome occupation continue for a prolonged time. Occupation problems may be especially acute if the United States must implement the bulk of the occupation itself rather than turn these duties over to a postwar international force.

If these views about the risk of disorder and the short welcome that Americans would enjoy sound familiar, that is because every organization that looked seriously into the situation sounded the same note.

The last and most distinctive part of the War College report is its "Mission Matrix"—a 135-item checklist of what tasks would have to be done right after the war and by whom. About a quarter of these were "critical tasks" for which the military would have to be prepared long before it reached Baghdad: securing the borders so that foreign terrorists would not slip in (as they in fact did), locating and destroying WMD supplies, protecting religious sites, performing police and security functions, and so on. The matrix was intended to lay out a phased shift of responsibilities, over months or years, from a mainly U.S. occupation force to international organizations and, finally, to sovereign Iraqis. By the end of December copies of the War College report were being circulated throughout the Army.

According to the standard military model, warfare unfolds through four phases: "deterrence and engagement," "seize the initiative," "decisive operations," and "post-conflict." Reality is never divided quite that neatly, of course, but the War College report stressed that Phase IV "post-conflict" planning absolutely had to start as early as possible, well before Phase III "decisive operations"—the war itself. But neither the Army nor the other services moved very far past Phase III thinking. "All the A-Team guys wanted to be in on Phase III, and the B-team guys were put on Phase IV," one man involved in Phase IV told me. Frederick Barton, of the Center for Strategic and International Studies, who was involved in postwar efforts in Haiti, Rwanda, and elsewhere, put it differently. "If you went to the Pentagon before the war, all the concentration was on the war," he said. "If you went there during the war, all the concentration was on the war. And if you went there after the war, they'd say, 'That's Jerry

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Bremer's job.'" Still, the War College report confirmed what the Army leadership already suspected: that its real challenges would begin when it took control of Baghdad.

TWO MONTHS BEFORE THE WAR

On January 27, 2003, the chief UN weapons inspector, Hans Blix, reported that "Iraq appears not to have come to a genuine acceptance, not even today, of the disarmament that was demanded of it." Twenty-four hours later, in his State of the Union address, President Bush said that the United States was still hoping for UN endorsement of an action against Iraq—but would not be limited by the absence of one.

Increasingly the question in Washington about war was When? Those arguing for delay said that it would make everything easier. Perhaps Saddam Hussein would die. Perhaps he would flee or be overthrown. Perhaps the UN inspectors would find his weapons, or determine conclusively that they no longer existed. Perhaps the United States would have time to assemble, if not a broad alliance for the battle itself, at least support for reconstruction and occupation, so that U.S. soldiers and taxpayers would not be left with the entire job. Even if the responsibility were to be wholly America's, each passing month would mean more time to plan the peace as thoroughly as the war: to train civil-affairs units (which specialize in peacekeeping rather than combat), and to hire Arabic-speakers. Indeed, several months into the U.S. occupation a confidential Army "lessons learned" study said that the "lack of competent interpreters" throughout Iraq had "impeded operations." Most of the "military linguists" who were operating in Iraq, the study said, "basically [had] the ability to tell the difference between a burro and a burrito."

Those arguing against delay said that the mere passage of time wouldn't do any good and would bring various risks. The world had already waited twelve years since the Gulf War for Saddam Hussein to disarm. Congress had already voted to endorse the war. The Security Council had already shown its resolve. The troops were already on their way. Each passing day, in this view, was a day in which Saddam Hussein might deploy his weapons of terror.

Early in January the National Intelligence Council, at the CIA, ran a two-day exercise on postwar problems. Pentagon representatives were still forbidden by OSD to attend. The exercise covered issues similar to those addressed in the Future of Iraq and Army War College reports—and, indeed, to those considered by the Council on Foreign Relations and the Senate Foreign Relations Committee: political reconstruction, public order, border control, humanitarian problems, finding and securing WMD.

On January 15 the humanitarian groups that had been meeting at USAID asked for a meeting with Donald Rumsfeld or Paul Wolfowitz. They never got one. At an earlier meeting, according to a participant, they had been told, "The President has already spent an hour on the humanitarian issues." The most senior Pentagon official to meet with them was Joseph Collins, a deputy assistant secretary of defense. The representatives of the NGOs were generally the most senior and experienced figures from each organization; the government representatives were not of the same stature. "Without naming names, the people we met were not real decision-makers," Joel Charny says.

On January 24 a group of archaeologists and scholars went to the Pentagon to brief Collins and other officials about the most important historic sites in Iraq, so that they could be spared in bombing. Thanks to precision targeting, the sites would indeed survive combat. Many, of course, were pillaged almost immediately afterward.

On January 30 the International Rescue Committee, which had been participating in the weekly Iraq Working Group sessions, publicly warned that a breakdown of law and order was likely unless the victorious U.S. forces acted immediately, with martial law if necessary, to prevent it. A week later Refugees International issued a similar warning.

Humanitarian groups asked for a meeting with Donald Rumsfeld or Paul Wolfowitz. They never got one. They had earlier been told, "The President has already spent an hour on the humanitarian issues."

At the end of January, Sam Gardiner entered the picture. Gardiner is a retired Air Force colonel who taught for years at the National War College in Washington. His specialty is war gaming, and through the 1990s he was involved once or twice a year in major simulations involving an attack on Baghdad. In the late 1990s Gardiner had been a visiting scholar at the Swedish National Defense University, where he studied the effects of the bombing of Serbia's electrical grid. The big discovery was how long it took to get the system up and running again, after even a precise and limited attack. "Decapitation" attacks on a regime, like the one planned for Iraq, routinely begin with disabling the electrical grid. Gardiner warned that this Phase III step could cause big Phase IV problems.

Late in 2002 Gardiner had put together what he called a "net assessment" of how Iraq would look after a successful U.S. attack. His intended audience, in government, would recognize the designation as droll. "Net assessment" is a familiar term for a CIA-style intelligence analysis, but Gardiner also meant it to reflect the unusual origin of his data: none of it was classified, and all of it came from the Internet. Through the power of search engines Gardiner was able to assemble

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what in other days would have seemed like a secret inside look at Iraq's infrastructure. He found electricity diagrams for the pumps used at Iraq's main water stations; he listed replacement parts for the most vulnerable elements of the electrical grid. He produced a scheme showing the elements of the system that would be easiest to attack but then quickest to repair. As it happened, damage to the electrical grid was a major postwar problem. Despite the precision of the bombing campaign, by mid-April wartime damage and immediate postwar looting had reduced Baghdad's power supply to one fifth its pre-war level, according to an internal Pentagon study. In mid-July the grid would be back to only half its pre-war level, working on a three-hours-on, three-hours-off schedule.

On January 19 Gardiner presented his net assessment, with information about Iraq's water, sewage, and public-health systems as well as its electrical grid, at an unclassified forum held by the RAND Corporation, in Washington. Two days later he presented it privately to Zalmay Khalilzad. Khalilzad was a former RAND analyst who had joined the Bush Administration's National Security Council and before the war was named the President's "special envoy and ambassador-at-large for Free Iraqis." (He has recently become the U.S. ambassador to Afghanistan.) Gardiner told me recently that Khalilzad was sobered by what he heard, and gave Gardiner a list of other people in the government who should certainly be shown the assessment. In the next few weeks Gardiner presented his findings to Bear McConnell, the USAID official in charge of foreign disaster relief, and Michael Dunn, an Air Force general who had once been Gardiner's student and worked with the Joint Chiefs of Staff as acting director for strategic plans and policy. A scheduled briefing with Joseph Collins, who was becoming the Pentagon's point man for postwar planning, was canceled at the last minute, after a description of Gardiner's report appeared in *Inside the Pentagon*, an influential newsletter.

The closer the nation came to war, the more the Administration seemed to view people like Gardiner as virtual Frenchmen—that is, softies who would always find some excuse to oppose the war. In one sense they were right. "It became clear that what I was really arguing was that we had to delay the war," Gardiner told me. "I was saying, 'We aren't ready, and in just six or eight weeks there is no way to get ready for everything we need to do.'" (The first bombs fell on Baghdad eight weeks after Gardiner's meeting with Khalilzad.) "Everyone was very interested and very polite and said I should talk to other people," Gardiner said. "But they had that 'Stalingrad stare'—people who had been doing stuff under pressure for too long and hadn't had enough sleep. You want to shake them and say, 'Are you really with me?'"

At the regular meeting of the Iraq Working Group on January 29, the NGO representatives discussed a recent piece of vital news. The Administration had chosen a leader for all postwar efforts in Iraq: Jay M. Garner, a retired three-star Army general who had worked successfully with the Kurds at the end of the Gulf War. The NGO representatives had no fault to find with the choice of Garner, but they were concerned, because his organization would be a subunit of the Pentagon rather than an independent operation or part of a civilian agency. "We had been pushing constantly to have reconstruction authority based in the State Department," Joel Charny told me. He and his colleagues were told by Wendy Chamberlin, a former ambassador to Pakistan who had become USAID's assistant administrator for the area including Iraq, that the NGOs should view Garner's appointment as a victory. After all, Garner was a civilian, and his office would draw representatives from across the government. "We said, 'C'mon, Wendy, his office is *in the Pentagon*!'" Charny says. Jim Bishop, a former U.S. ambassador who now works for InterAction, pointed out that the NGOs, like the U.S. government, were still hoping that other governments might help to fund humanitarian efforts. Bishop asked rhetorically, "Who from the international community is going to fund reconstruction run through the Pentagon?"

Garner assembled a team and immediately went to work. What happened to him in the next two months is the best-chronicled part of the postwar fiasco. He started from scratch, trying to familiarize himself with what the rest of the government had already done. On February 21 he convened a two-day meeting of diplomats, soldiers, academics, and de-

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E LUCEVAN LE STELLE

And the stars shone, and the earth unstoppered
its perfumes, the garden gate scrinched
open, footsteps lisped along the path
and they were hers, and she was mine.

And my hand shook the more slowly
I unwrapped and dawdlier I kissed her,
and her aromas rose, and the hour fled,
which is the way with hours.

And I've unveiled myself of any hope,
and death's steps rasp along the path,
and, like any star, I have nothing
to burn but the life I love.

—WILLIAM MATTHEWS

William Matthews (1942–1997) published eleven volumes of poetry in his lifetime. This poem appears in Search Party: Collected Poems of William Matthews, *edited by Sebastian Matthews and Stanley Plumly, which has just been published.*

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velopment experts, who gathered at the National Defense University to discuss postwar plans. "The messiah could not have organized a sufficient relief and reconstruction or humanitarian effort in that short a time," a former CIA analyst named Judith Yaphe said after attending the meeting, according to Mark Fineman, Doyle McManus, and Robin Wright, of the *Los Angeles Times*. (Fineman died of a heart attack last fall, while reporting from Baghdad.) Garner was also affected by tension between OSD and the rest of the government. Garner had heard about the Future of Iraq project, although Rumsfeld had told him not to waste his time reading it. Nonetheless, he decided to bring its director, Thomas Warrick, onto his planning team. Garner, who clearly does not intend to be the fall guy for postwar problems in Baghdad, told me last fall that Rumsfeld had asked him to kick Warrick off his staff. In an interview with the BBC last November, Garner confirmed details of the firing that had earlier been published in *Newsweek*. According to Garner, Rumsfeld asked him, "Jay, have you got a guy named Warrick on your team?" "I said, 'Yes, I do.' He said, 'Well, I've got to ask you to remove him.' I said, 'I don't want to remove him; he's too valuable.' But he said, 'This came to me from such a high level that I can't overturn it, and I've just got to ask you to remove Mr. Warrick.'" *Newsweek*'s conclusion was that the man giving the instructions was Vice President Cheney.

This is the place to note that in several months of interviews I never once heard someone say "We took this step because the President indicated ..." or "The President really wanted ..." Instead I heard "Rumsfeld wanted," "Powell thought," "The Vice President pushed," "Bremer asked," and so on. One need only compare this with any discussion of foreign policy in Reagan's or Clinton's Administration—or Nixon's, or Kennedy's, or Johnson's, or most others—to sense how unusual is the absence of the President as prime mover. The other conspicuously absent figure was Condoleezza Rice, even after she was supposedly put in charge of coordinating Administration policy on Iraq, last October. It is possible that the President's confidants are so discreet that they have kept all his decisions and instructions secret. But that would run counter to the fundamental nature of bureaucratic Washington, where people cite a President's authority whenever they possibly can ("The President feels strongly about this, so ...").

To me, the more likely inference is that Bush took a strong overall position—fighting terrorism is this generation's challenge—and then was exposed to only a narrow range of options worked out by the contending forces within his Administration. If this interpretation proves to be right, and if Bush did in fact wish to know more, then blame will fall on those whose responsibility it was to present him with the widest range of choices: Cheney and Rice.

ONE MONTH BEFORE THE WAR

On February 14 Hans Blix reaffirmed to the United Nations his view that Iraq had decided to cooperate with inspectors. The division separating the United States and Britain from France, Germany, and Russia became stark. On February 15 antiwar demonstrators massed in major cities around the world: a million in Madrid, more than a million in Rome, and a million or more in London, the largest demonstration in Britain's history.

On February 21 Tony Blair joined George Bush at Camp David, to underscore their joint determination to remove the threat from Iraq.

THREE WEEKS BEFORE THE WAR

As the war drew near, the dispute about how to conduct it became public. On February 25 the Senate Armed Services Committee summoned all four Chiefs of Staff to answer questions about the war—and its aftermath. The crucial exchange began with a question from the ranking Democrat, Carl Levin. He asked Eric Shinseki, the Army Chief of Staff, how many soldiers would be required not to defeat Iraq but to occupy it. Well aware that he was at odds with his civilian superiors at the Pentagon, Shinseki at first deflected the question. "In specific numbers," he said, "I would have to rely on combatant commanders' exact requirements. But I think ..." and he trailed off.

"How about a range?" Levin asked. Shinseki replied—and recapitulated the argument he had made to Rumsfeld.

> I would say that what's been mobilized to this point, something on the order of several hundred thousand soldiers, are probably, you know, a figure that would be required.
>
> We're talking about post-hostilities control over a piece of geography that's fairly significant, with the kinds of ethnic tensions that could lead to other problems. And so, it takes significant ground force presence to maintain safe and secure environment to ensure that the people are fed, that water is distributed, all the normal responsibilities that go along with administering a situation like this.

Two days later Paul Wolfowitz appeared before the House Budget Committee. He began working through his prepared statement about the Pentagon's budget request and then asked permission to "digress for a moment" and respond to recent commentary, "some of it quite outlandish, about what our postwar requirements might

If the failure to stop the looting was a major sin of omission, disbanding the Iraqi army was a catastrophic error of commission—creating an instant enemy class. Every pre-war study had warned against it.

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be in Iraq." Everyone knew he meant Shinseki's remarks.

"I am reluctant to try to predict anything about what the cost of a possible conflict in Iraq would be," Wolfowitz said, "or what the possible cost of reconstructing and stabilizing that country afterwards might be." This was more than reluctance—it was the Administration's consistent policy before the war. "But some of the higher-end predictions that we have been hearing recently, such as the notion that it will take several hundred thousand U.S. troops to provide stability in post-Saddam Iraq, are wildly off the mark."

This was as direct a rebuke of a military leader by his civilian superior as the United States had seen in fifty years. Wolfowitz offered a variety of incidental reasons why his views were so different from those he alluded to: "I would expect that even countries like France will have a strong interest in assisting Iraq's reconstruction," and "We can't be sure that the Iraqi people will welcome us as liberators ... [but] I am reasonably certain that they will greet us as liberators, and that will help us to keep requirements down." His fundamental point was this: "It's hard to conceive that it would take more forces to provide stability in post-Saddam Iraq than it would take to conduct the war itself and to secure the surrender of Saddam's security forces and his army. Hard to imagine."

None of the government working groups that had seriously looked into the question had simply "imagined" that occupying Iraq would be more difficult than defeating it. They had presented years' worth of experience suggesting that this would be the central reality of the undertaking. Wolfowitz either didn't notice this evidence or chose to disbelieve it. What David Halberstam said of Robert McNamara in *The Best and the Brightest* is true of those at OSD as well: they were brilliant, and they were fools.

TWO WEEKS BEFORE THE WAR

At the beginning of March, Andrew Natsios won a little-noticed but crucial battle. Because the United States had not yet officially decided whether to go to war, Natsios had not been able to persuade the Office of Management and Budget to set aside the money that USAID would need for immediate postwar efforts in Iraq. The battle was the more intense because Natsios, unlike his counterparts at the State Department, was both privately and publicly supportive of the case for war. Just before combat he was able to arrange an emergency $200 million grant from USAID to the World Food Programme. This money could be used to buy food immediately for Iraqi relief operations—and it helped to ensure that there were no postwar food shortages.

ONE WEEK BEFORE THE WAR

On March 13 humanitarian organizations had gathered at USAID headquarters for what was effectively the last meeting of the Iraq Working Group. Wendy Chamberlin, the senior USAID official present, discussed the impending war in terms that several participants noted, wrote down, and later mentioned to me. "It's going to be very quick," she said, referring to the actual war. "We're going to meet their immediate needs. We're going to turn it over to the Iraqis. And we're going to be out within the year."

On March 17 the United States, Britain, and Spain announced that they would abandon their attempt to get a second Security Council vote in favor of the war, and President Bush gave Saddam Hussein an ultimatum: leave the country within forty-eight hours or suffer the consequences. On March 19 the first bombs fell on Baghdad.

AFTERWARD

On April 9 U.S. forces took Baghdad. On April 14 the Pentagon announced that most of the fighting was over. On May 1 President Bush declared that combat operations were at an end. By then looting had gone on in Baghdad for several weeks. "When the United States entered Baghdad on April 9, it entered a city largely undamaged by a carefully executed military campaign," Peter Galbraith, a former U.S. ambassador to Croatia, told a congressional committee in June. "However, in the three weeks following the U.S. takeover, unchecked looting effectively gutted every important public institution in the city—with the notable exception of the oil ministry." On April 11, when asked why U.S. soldiers were not stopping the looting, Donald Rumsfeld said, "Freedom's untidy, and free people are free to make mistakes and commit crimes and do bad things. They're also free to live their lives and do wonderful things, and that's what's going to happen here."

This was a moment, as when he tore up the TPFDD, that Rumsfeld crossed a line. His embrace of "uncertainty" became a reckless evasion of responsibility. He had only disdain for "predictions," yes, and no one could have forecast every circumstance of postwar Baghdad. But virtually everyone who had thought about the issue had warned about the risk of looting. U.S. soldiers could have prevented it—and would have, if so instructed.

The looting spread, destroying the infrastructure that had survived the war and creating the expectation of future chaos. "There is this kind of magic moment, which you can't imagine until you see it," an American civilian who was in Baghdad during the looting told me. "People are used to *someone* being in charge, and when they realize no one is, the fabric rips."

On May 6 the Administration announced that Bremer would be the new U.S. administrator in Iraq. Two weeks into that job Bremer disbanded the Iraqi army and other parts of the Baathist security structure.

If the failure to stop the looting was a major sin of omission, sending the Iraqi soldiers home was, in the view of nearly everyone except those who made the decision, a catastrophic error of commission. There were two arguments for taking this step. First, the army had "already disbanded

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itself," as Douglas Feith put it to me—soldiers had melted away, with their weapons. Second, the army had been an integral part of the Sunni-dominated Baathist security structure. Leaving it intact would be the wrong symbol for the new Iraq—especially for the Shiites, whom the army had oppressed. "These actions are part of a robust campaign to show the Iraqi people that the Saddam regime is gone, and will never return," a statement from Bremer's office said.

The case against wholesale dissolution of the army, rather than a selective purge at the top, was that it created an instant enemy class: hundreds of thousands of men who still had their weapons but no longer had a paycheck or a place to go each day. Manpower that could have helped on security patrols became part of the security threat. Studies from the Army War College, the Future of Iraq project, and the Center for Strategic and International Studies, to name a few, had all considered exactly this problem and suggested ways of removing the noxious leadership while retaining the ordinary troops. They had all warned strongly against disbanding the Iraqi army. The Army War College, for example, said in its report, "To tear apart the Army in the war's aftermath could lead to the destruction of one of the only forces for unity within the society."

"This is not something that was dreamed up by somebody at the last minute," Walter Slocombe—who held Feith's job, undersecretary of defense for policy, during the Clinton Administration, and who is now a security adviser on Bremer's team—told Peter Slevin, of *The Washington Post*, last November. He said that he had discussed the plan with Wolfowitz at least once and with Feith several times, including the day before the order was given. "The critical point," he told Slevin, "was that nobody argued that we shouldn't do this." No one, that is, the Administration listened to.

Here is the hardest question: How could the Administration have thought that it was safe to proceed in blithe indifference to the warnings of nearly everyone with operational experience in modern military occupations? Saying that the Administration considered this a truly urgent "war of necessity" doesn't explain the indifference. Even if it feared that Iraq might give terrorists fearsome weapons at any moment, it could still have thought more carefully about the day after the war. World War II was a war of absolute necessity, and the United States still found time for detailed occupation planning.

The President must have known that however bright the scenarios, the reality of Iraq eighteen months after the war would affect his re-election. The political risk was enormous and obvious. Administration officials must have believed not only that the war was necessary but also that a successful occupation *would not require* any more forethought than they gave it.

It will be years before we fully understand how intelligent people convinced themselves of this. My guess is that three factors will be important parts of the explanation.

One is the panache of Donald Rumsfeld. He was near the zenith of his influence as the war was planned. His emphasis on the vagaries of life was all the more appealing within his circle because of his jauntiness and verve. But he was not careful about remembering his practical obligations. Precisely because he could not foresee all hazards, he should have been more zealous about avoiding the ones that were evident—the big and obvious ones the rest of the government tried to point out to him.

A second is the triumphalism of the Administration. In the twenty-five years since Ronald Reagan's rise, political conservatives have changed position in a way they have not fully recognized. Reagan's arrival marked the end of a half century of Democrat-dominated government in Washington. Yes, there has been one Democratic President since Reagan, and eventually there will be others. But as a rule the Republicans are now in command. Older Republicans—those who came of age in the 1960s and 1970s, those who are now in power in the Administration—have not fully adjusted to this reality. They still feel like embattled insurgents, as if the liberals were in the driver's seat. They recognize their electoral strength but feel that in the battle of ideology their main task is to puncture fatuous liberal ideas.

The consequence is that Republicans are less used to exposing their own ideas to challenges than they should be. Today's liberals *know* there is a challenge to every aspect of their world view. All they have to do is turn on the radio. Today's conservatives are more likely to think that any contrary ideas are leftovers from the tired 1960s, much as liberals of the Kennedy era thought that conservatives were in thrall to Herbert Hoover. In addition, the conservatives' understanding of modern history makes them think that their instincts are likely to be right and that their critics will be proved wrong. Europeans scorned Ronald Reagan, and the United Nations feared him, but in the end the Soviet Union was gone. So for reasons of personal, political, and intellectual history, it is understandable that members of this Administration could proceed down one path in defiance of mounting evidence of its perils. The Democrats had similar destructive self-confidence in the 1960s, when they did their most grandiose Great Society thinking.

The third factor is the nature of the President himself. Leadership is always a balance between making large choices and being aware of details. George W. Bush has an obvious preference for large choices. This gave him his chance for greatness after the September 11 attacks. But his lack of curiosity about significant details may be his fatal weakness. When the decisions of the past eighteen months are assessed and judged, the Administration will be found wanting for its carelessness. Because of warnings it chose to ignore, it squandered American prestige, fortune, and lives. ■

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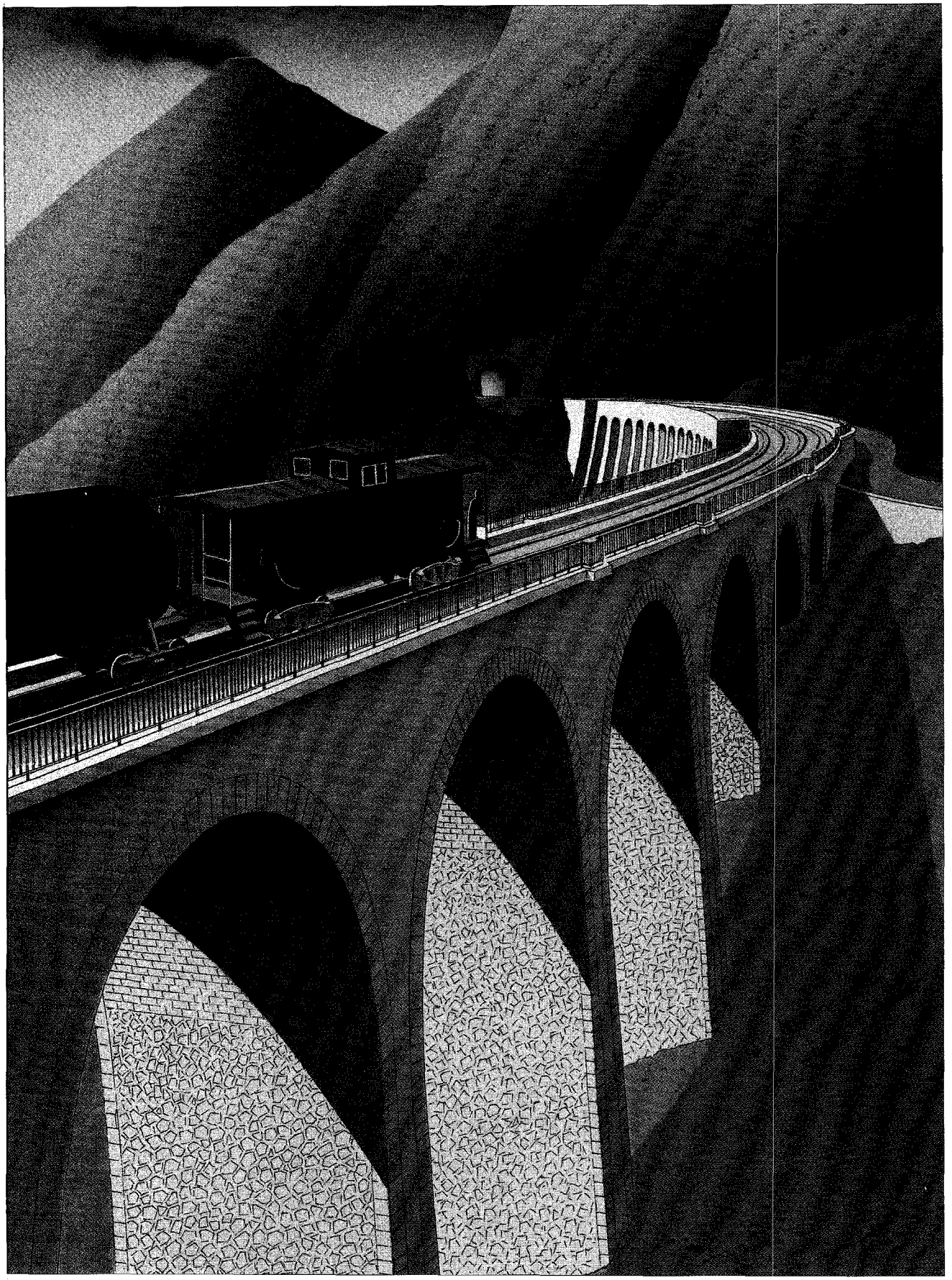

CLOSE CALL *by Guy Billout*

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SPIES, LIES, AND WEAPONS: WHAT WENT WRONG

How could we have been so far off in our estimates of Saddam Hussein's weapons programs? A leading Iraq expert and intelligence analyst in the Clinton Administration—whose book The Threatening Storm *proved deeply influential in the run-up to the war—gives a detailed account of how and why we erred*

BY KENNETH M. POLLACK

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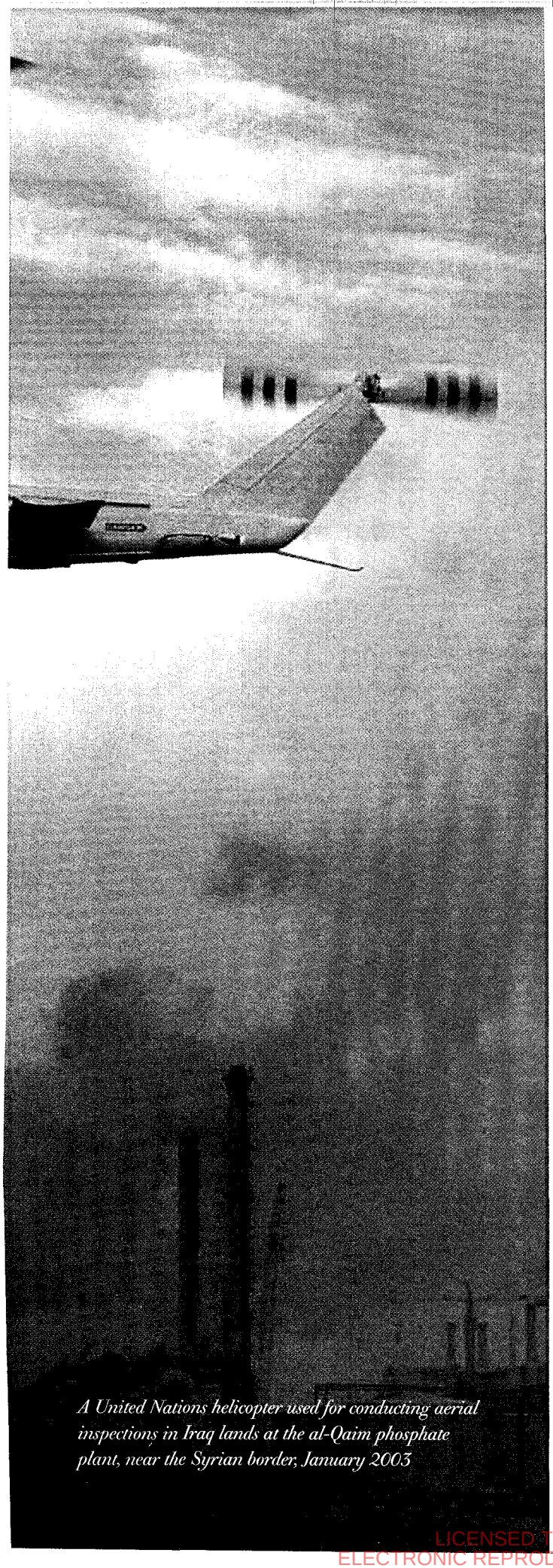

A United Nations helicopter used for conducting aerial inspections in Iraq lands at the al-Qaim phosphate plant, near the Syrian border, January 2003

Let's start with one truth: last March, when the United States and its coalition partners invaded Iraq, the American public and much of the rest of the world believed that after Saddam Hussein's regime sank, a vast flotsam of weapons of mass destruction would bob to the surface. That, of course, has not been the case. In the words of David Kay, the principal adviser to the Iraq Survey Group (ISG), an organization created late last spring to search for prohibited weaponry, "I think all of us who entered Iraq expected the job of actually discovering deployed weapons to be easier than it has turned out to be." Many people are now asking very reasonable questions about why they were misled.

Democrats have typically accused the Bush Administration of exaggerating the threat posed by Iraq in order to justify an unnecessary war. Republicans have typically claimed that the fault lay with the CIA and the rest of the U.S. intelligence community, which they say overestimated the threat from Iraq—a claim that carries the unlikely implication that Bush's team might not have opted for war if it had understood that Saddam was not as dangerous as he seemed.

Both sides appear to be at least partly right. The intelligence community did overestimate the scope and progress of Iraq's WMD programs, although not to the extent that many people believe. The Administration stretched those estimates to make a case not only for going to war but for doing so at once, rather than taking the time to build regional and international support for military action.

This issue has some personal relevance for me. I began my career as a Persian Gulf military analyst at the CIA, where I saw an earlier generation of technical analysts mistakenly conclude that Saddam Hussein was much further away from having a nuclear weapon than the post–Gulf War inspections revealed. I later moved on to the National Security Council, where I served two tours, in 1995–1996 and 1999–2001. During the latter stint the intelligence community convinced me and the rest of the Clinton Administration that Saddam had reconstituted his WMD programs following the withdrawal of the UN inspectors, in 1998, and was only a matter of years away from having a nuclear weapon. In 2002 I wrote a book called *The Threatening Storm: The Case for Invading Iraq*, in which I argued that because all our other options had failed, the United States would ultimately have to go to war to remove Saddam before he acquired a functioning nuclear weapon. Thus it was with more than a little interest that I pondered the question of why we didn't find in Iraq what we were so certain we would.

What We Thought We Knew

The U.S. intelligence community's belief that Saddam was aggressively pursuing weapons of mass destruction pre-dated Bush's inauguration, and therefore cannot be attributed to political pressure. It was first advanced at the end of the 1990s, at a time when President Bill Clinton was trying to facilitate a peace agreement be-

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tween Israel and the Palestinians and was hardly seeking assessments that the threat from Iraq was growing.

In congressional testimony in March of 2002 Robert Einhorn, Clinton's assistant secretary of state for nonproliferation, summed up the intelligence community's conclusions about Iraq at the end of the Clinton Administration:

> "How close is the peril of Iraqi WMD? Today, or at most within a few months, Iraq could launch missile attacks with chemical or biological weapons against its neighbors (albeit attacks that would be ragged, inaccurate, and limited in size). Within four or five years it could have the capability to threaten most of the Middle East and parts of Europe with missiles armed with nuclear weapons containing fissile material produced indigenously—and to threaten U.S. territory with such weapons delivered by nonconventional means, such as commercial shipping containers. If it managed to get its hands on sufficient quantities of already produced fissile material, these threats could arrive much sooner."

In October of 2002 the National Intelligence Council, the highest analytical body in the U.S. intelligence community, issued a classified National Intelligence Estimate on Iraq's WMD, representing the consensus of the intelligence community. Although after the war some complained that the NIE had been a rush job, and that the NIC should have been more careful in its choice of language, in fact the report accurately reflected what intelligence analysts had been telling Clinton Administration officials like me for years in verbal briefings.

A declassified version of the 2002 NIE was released to the public in July of last year. Its principal conclusions:

- "Iraq has continued its weapons of mass destruction (WMD) programs in defiance of UN resolutions and restrictions. Baghdad has chemical and biological weapons as well as missiles with ranges in excess of UN restrictions; if left unchecked, it probably will have a nuclear weapon during this decade." (The classified version of the NIE gave an estimate of five to seven years.)
- "Since inspections ended in 1998, Iraq has maintained its chemical weapons effort, energized its missile program, and invested more heavily in biological weapons; most analysts assess [that] Iraq is reconstituting its nuclear weapons program."
- "If Baghdad acquires sufficient weapons-grade fissile material from abroad, it could make a nuclear weapon within a year … Without such material from abroad, Iraq probably would not be able to make a weapon until the last half of the decade."
- "Baghdad has begun renewed production of chemical warfare agents, probably including mustard, sarin, cyclosarin, and VX … Saddam probably has stocked a few hundred metric tons of CW agents."
- "All key aspects—R&D, production, and weaponization—of Iraq's offensive BW [biological warfare] program are active and most elements are larger and more advanced than they were before the Gulf war … Baghdad has established a large-scale, redundant, and concealed BW agent production capability, which includes mobile facilities; these facilities can evade detection, are highly survivable, and can exceed the production rates Iraq had prior to the Gulf war."

U.S. government analysts were not alone in these views. In the late spring of 2002 I participated in a Washington meeting about Iraqi WMD. Those present included nearly twenty former inspectors from the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM), the force established in 1991 to oversee the elimination of WMD in Iraq. One of the senior people put a question to the group: Did anyone in the room doubt that Iraq was currently operating a secret centrifuge plant? No one did. Three people added that they believed Iraq was also operating a secret calutron plant (a facility for separating uranium isotopes).

Other nations' intelligence services were similarly aligned with U.S. views. Somewhat remarkably, given how adamantly Germany would oppose the war, the German Federal Intelligence Service held the bleakest view of all, arguing that Iraq might be able to build a nuclear weapon within three years. Israel, Russia, Britain, China, and even France held positions similar to that of the United States; France's President Jacques Chirac told *Time* magazine last February, "There is a problem—the probable possession of weapons of mass destruction by an uncontrollable country, Iraq. The international community is right … in having decided Iraq should be disarmed." In sum, *no one* doubted that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction.

WHAT WE THINK WE KNOW NOW

But it appears that Iraq may not have had any actual weapons of mass destruction. A number of caveats are in order. We do not yet have a complete picture of Iraq's WMD programs. Initial U.S. efforts to seek out WMD caches were badly lacking: an American artillery unit that had too few people for the task and virtually no plan of action had been hastily assigned the mission. Not surprisingly, its efforts garnered little useful information. According to Judith Miller, a *New York Times* reporter who was embedded with the unit, by mid-June—nearly two months after the end of major combat operations—the United States had interviewed only thirteen out of hundreds of Iraqi scientists. Documents relating to the programs are known to have been destroyed. Much of Iraq is yet to be explored; as David Kay, of the Iraq Survey Group, which took over the search for WMD in June, told Congress, only ten of Iraq's 130 major ammunition dumps had been thoroughly checked as of early October (the time of his testimony). Now that Saddam Hussein is in custody, it is possible that new information may be forthcoming, or that closemouthed Iraqis will offer fresh details.

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Nevertheless, the preliminary findings of the ISG will probably not change dramatically, at least not in their broad contours. Kay summarized those findings in his October testimony.

- Iraq had preserved some of its technological nuclear capability from before the Gulf War. However, no evidence suggested that Saddam had undertaken any significant steps after 1998 toward reconstituting the program to build nuclear weapons or to produce fissile material.
- Little evidence surfaced that Iraq had continued to produce chemical weapons; only a minimal amount of clandestine research had been done on them. For instance, the production line at the Fallujah II facility (the plant that intelligence officers believed was Iraq's principal site for making chlorine, an ingredient in some chemical-warfare agents) turned out to be in derelict condition and had not operated since the Gulf War. Nevertheless, Iraqi officials seemed to believe that they could convert existing civilian pharmaceutical plants to chemical-weapons production, and that Saddam was interested in their ability to do so.
- Iraq made determined efforts to retain some capabilities for biological warfare. It maintained an undeclared network of laboratories and other facilities within the apparatus of its security services, and as Kay put it, "this clandestine capability was suitable for preserving BW expertise, BW-capable facilities, and continuing R&D—all key elements for maintaining a capability for resuming BW production." To disguise its biological-warfare programs Baghdad had scientists working on overt projects that were closely related to proscribed activities.
- Iraq seemed to have been most aggressive in pursuing proscribed missiles. In Kay's words, "detainees and cooperative sources indicate that beginning in 2000 Saddam ordered the development of ballistic missiles with ranges of at least [240 miles] and up to [620 miles] and that measures to conceal these projects from [UN inspectors] were initiated in late 2002, ahead of the arrival of inspectors." The Iraqis were also working on clustering liquid-fueled rocket engines in order to produce a longer-range missile, and were trying to convert certain surface-to-air missiles into surface-to-surface missiles with a range of 150 miles. Most troubling of all, the ISG uncovered evidence that from 1999 to 2002 Iraq had negotiated with North Korea to buy technology for No Dong missiles, which have a range of 800 miles.

Overall, these findings suggest that Iraq did retain prohibited WMD programs, but that those programs were not so extensive, advanced, or threatening as the National Intelligence Estimate maintained.

More-cautious analysts had argued that the NIE's assessment that Iraq had large stockpiles of chemical and biological weapons was unlikely, because such munitions deteriorate rapidly and can be quickly produced in bulk if production lines and precursor agents are available (making stockpiles unnecessary as well as inefficient). These analysts instead believed that Iraq had a "just-in-time" production capability—that it could churn out these weapons as needed, using hidden or dual-use facilities. But not even this more conservative scenario was borne out by the ISG's investigations. Sources told the group that Saddam and his son Uday had each, on separate occasions in 2001 and 2002, asked officials associated with Iraq's chemical-warfare program how long it would take to produce chemical agents and weapons. One official reportedly told Saddam that it would take six months to produce mustard gas (among the easiest such agents to manufacture); another told Uday that it would take two months to produce mustard gas and two years to produce sarin (a simple nerve agent). The questions do not suggest the presence of large stockpiles. The answers do not support a just-in-time capability.

The ISG's findings to date are most damning in the nuclear arena—as it happens, the segment of Iraq's WMD program in which the initial findings are most likely to be correct, because nuclear-weapons production is extremely difficult to conceal. The perceived nuclear threat was always the most disturbing one. The U.S. intelligence community's belief toward the end of the Clinton Administration that Iraq had reconstituted its nuclear program and was close to acquiring nuclear weapons led me and other Administration officials to support the idea of a full-scale invasion of Iraq, albeit not right away. The NIE's judgment to the same effect was the real linchpin of the Bush Administration's case for an invasion.

What we have found in Iraq since the invasion belies that judgment. Saddam did retain basic elements for a nuclear-weapons program and the desire to acquire such weapons at some point, but the program itself was dormant. Saddam had not ordered its resumption (although some reports suggest that he considered doing so in 2002). In all probability Iraq was considerably further from having a nuclear weapon than the five to seven years estimated in the classified version of the NIE.

The View From Baghdad

Figuring out why we overestimated Iraq's WMD capabilities involves figuring out what the Iraqis, especially Saddam Hussein, were thinking and doing throughout the 1990s. The story starts right after the Gulf War. An Iraqi document that fell into the inspectors' hands revealed that in April of 1991 a high-level Iraqi committee had ordered many of the country's WMD activities to be hidden from UN inspectors, even though compliance with the inspections was a condition for the lifting of economic sanctions imposed after the invasion of Kuwait. The document was a report from a nuclear-weapons plant describing how it carried out this order. According to UNSCOM's final

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report, "The facility was instructed to remove evidence of the true activities at the facility, evacuate documents to hide sites, make physical alterations to the site to hide its true purpose, develop cover stories, and conduct mock inspections to prepare for UN inspectors."

A great deal of other information substantiates the idea that Saddam at first decided to try to keep a considerable portion of his WMD programs intact and hidden. His efforts probably included retaining some munitions, but mainly concerned production and research elements. In other words, Saddam did initially try to maintain a "just-in-time" capability. However, it became increasingly clear how difficult this would be. In the summer of 1991 inspectors tracked down and destroyed Saddam's calutrons. Their discoveries may have convinced him that he would have to put his WMD programs on hold until after the sanctions were lifted—something he reportedly thought would happen within a matter of months.

But the inspectors proved more tenacious and the international community more steadfast than the Iraqis had expected. Accordingly, from June of 1991 to May of 1992 Iraq unilaterally destroyed parts of its WMD programs (as we know from subsequent Iraqi admissions). This action appears to have served two purposes: It got rid of unnecessary munitions and secondary equipment that the inspectors might have found, which would have constituted proof of Iraqi noncompliance. And it helped Baghdad conceal more-important elements of the programs, because the regime could point to the unilateral destructions as evidence of cooperation and could claim that even more material had been destroyed. (Since the fall of Baghdad scientists have told the ISG that key equipment was in fact diverted from these destructions and hidden.)

In 1995 matters changed. That August, Hussein Kamel, Saddam's son-in-law and the head of Iraq's WMD programs, defected to Jordan, prompting a panicked Baghdad to hurriedly turn over hundreds of thousands of pages of new documentation to the United Nations. According to the former chief UN weapons inspector Rolf Ekeus, Kamel's statements and the Iraqi documents squared with what UNSCOM had been finding: although all actual weapons had been eliminated, either by the UN or in the earlier destructions, Iraq had preserved production and R&D programs. Although the Iraqis tried to withhold any highly incriminating documents from the UN (and, ridiculously, claimed that Kamel had been running the programs on his own, without anyone else's knowledge), in their rush they overlooked several containing crucial information about previously concealed aspects of the nuclear and biological programs.

Other secrets were laid bare that same year. A U.S.-UN sting operation caught the Iraqis trying to smuggle 115 missile gyroscopes through Jordan. (UN inspectors later found other gyroscopes hidden at the bottom of the Tigris River.) Iraq was forced to admit to the existence of a facility to build Scud-missile engines, and to destroy a hidden plant for manufacturing modified Scud missiles. It was also forced to admit to having made much greater progress on its nuclear program before the Gulf War than it had previously acknowledged. Most important, it was forced to admit that a very large biological-weapons plant at al-Hakim, whose existence had been concealed from UN inspectors, had produced 500,000 liters of biological agents in 1989 and 1990, and that it was still functional in 1995. Three years after this confession Lieutenant General Amer al-Saadi, Saddam's principal liaison with the UN, told inspectors that Iraq would offer no excuse or defense for having denied the existence of its biological-weapons program. He stated matter-of-factly that Iraq had made a political decision to conceal it.

Either late in 1995 or at some point in 1996 Saddam probably recognized that trying to retain his just-in-time capability had become counterproductive. The inspectors kept finding pieces of the programs, and each discovery pushed the lifting of the sanctions further into the future. It's important to keep in mind several other events of this period. Saddam's internal position was very shaky. He had faced disturbances in several of his most loyal Sunni tribes. In addition to Kamel, a number of high-ranking officials had defected to the West, including Saddam's chief of military intelligence, Wafic Samarai. Coup plots abounded. In 1995 the Kurds smashed two Iraqi infantry brigades at Irbil, humiliating the Iraqi army. In 1996 Iraqi intelligence uncovered a CIA-backed coup attempt whose participants had penetrated some of Saddam's most sensitive intelligence services. Iraq's economy was suffocating under the sanctions, and inflation was rampant. Given this precarious situation, Saddam probably decided to scale back his WMD programs (with the likely exception of work on proscribed missiles, which could be concealed by Iraq's permitted missile program) by destroying additional equipment, keeping the bare minimum needed to rebuild them at some point, in order to reduce the risk of further discoveries. This would have meant giving up the idea of just-in-time production capabilities and limiting his efforts to hiding documents and only key pieces of equipment. In short, Saddam switched from trying to hang on to the maximum production and research assets of his WMD programs to trying to keep only the minimum necessary to reconstitute the programs at some point after the sanctions had been lifted.

The end of the inspections eliminated the single best means of vetting intelligence about Iraq. Desperate for information, the intelligence agencies believed many reports that now seem deeply suspect.

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WHAT WAS SADDAM THINKING?

Having decided to give up so much of his WMD capability, why didn't Saddam change his behavior toward the UN inspectors and demonstrate a spirit of candor and cooperation? Even after 1996 the Iraqis took a confrontational posture toward UNSCOM, fighting to prevent inspectors from going where they wanted to go and seeing what they wanted to see. The governments of the world inferred from this defiance that Saddam was still not complying with the UN resolutions, and the sanctions therefore stayed in place.

The first and most obvious answer is that Saddam still had some things to hide, and was fearful of their discovery. Although he did unquestionably have some things to hide, this answer is not entirely satisfying. Iraq was able to conceal the minimized remnants of its WMD programs so well that UNSCOM found little incriminating evidence in 1997 and 1998. This early success should have given Saddam the confidence to begin to cooperate more fully with the UN resolutions. But throughout the period leading up to the war Saddam remained as obstinate as ever.

An alternative explanation, offered by Iraq's former UN ambassador, Tariq Aziz, and other officials captured after last year's war, goes like this: Saddam was pretending to have WMD in order to enhance his prestige among the other Arab nations. This explanation doesn't ring completely true either. It is certainly the case that Saddam garnered a great deal of admiration from Arabs of many countries by appearing to have such weapons, and that he aspired to dominate the Arab world. But this theory assumes that he was willing to incur severe penalties for the UN's belief that he still had WMD without reaping any tangible benefits from actually having them. If prestige had been more important to him than the lifting of the sanctions, it would have been more logical and more in keeping with his character to simply retain all his WMD capabilities.

Saddam's behavior may have been driven by completely different considerations. Saddam has always evinced much greater concern for his internal position than for his external status. He has made any number of highly foolish foreign-policy decisions—for example, invading Kuwait and then deciding to stick around and fight the U.S.-led coalition—in response to domestic problems that he feared threatened his grip on power. The same forces may have been at work here; after all, ever since the Iran-Iraq war WMD had been an important element of Saddam's strength within Iraq. He used them against the Kurds in the late 1980s, and during the revolts that broke out after the Gulf War, he sent signals that he might use them against both the Kurds and the Shiites. He may have feared that if his internal adversaries realized that he no longer had the capability to use these weapons, they would try to move against him. In a similar vein, Saddam's standing among the Sunni elites who constituted his power base was linked to a great extent to his having made Iraq a regional power—which the elites saw as a product of Iraq's unconventional arsenal. Thus openly giving up his WMD could also have jeopardized his position with crucial supporters.

Furthermore, Saddam may have felt trapped by his initial reckoning that he could fool the UN inspectors and that the sanctions would be short-lived. Because of this mistaken calculation he had subjected Iraq to terrible hardships. Suddenly cooperating with the inspectors would have meant admitting to both his opponents and his supporters that his course of action had been a mistake and that, having now given up most of his WMD programs, he had devastated Iraqi society *for no reason.*

This suggests that in 1995–1996 Saddam took one of his famous gambles—gambles that almost never worked out for him. He chose not to "come clean" and cooperate with the UN for fear that this would make him look weak to both his domestic enemies and his domestic allies, either of whom might then have moved against him. But he would try to greatly diminish the chances that UNSCOM would find more evidence of his continuing noncompliance by reducing his WMD programs to the bare minimum, in hopes that the absence of evidence would lead to the lifting of sanctions—something he desperately sought in 1996.

In 2002 and well into 2003 I received numerous complaints from colleagues in the intelligence and policy communities about how the Bush Administration was handling the intelligence on Iraq.

In other respects Saddam's fortunes began to rise in 1996. Although the CIA-backed coup attempt may have signified internal weakness, the fact that Saddam snuffed it out, as he had many previous attempts, signified strength. Also, to avenge the Iraqi army's 1995 defeat at Irbil, Saddam manipulated infighting among the Kurds so as to allow his Republican Guards to drive into the city, smash the Kurd defenders, and arrest several hundred CIA-backed rebels. As the historian Amatzia Baram has persuasively argued in his book *Building Toward Crisis* (1998), these successes made Saddam feel secure enough to swallow his pride and accept UN Resolution 986, the oil-for-food program, which he had previously rejected as an infringement on Iraqi sovereignty. Oil-for-food turned out to be an enormous boon for the Iraqi economy, and commodity prices fell quickly, stabilizing the dinar.

The oil-for-food program itself gave Saddam clout to apply toward the lifting of the sanctions. Under Resolution

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986 Iraq could choose to whom it would sell its oil and from whom it would buy its food and medicine. Baghdad could therefore reward cooperative states with contracts. Not surprisingly, France and Russia regularly topped the list of Iraq's oil-for-food partners. In addition, Iraq could set the prices—and since Saddam did not really care whether he was importing enough food and medicine for his people's needs, he could sell oil on the cheap and buy food and medicine at inflated prices as additional payoff to friendly governments. He made it clear that he wanted his trading partners to ignore Iraqi smuggling and try to get the sanctions lifted.

By 1997 the international environment had changed markedly, in ways that probably convinced Saddam that he didn't need to cooperate with the inspectors. The same international outcry—against the suffering inflicted by the Iraq sanctions—that prompted the United States to craft the oil-for-food deal was creating momentum for lifting the sanctions completely. At that point it was reasonable for Saddam to believe that in the not too distant future the sanctions either would be lifted or would be so undermined as to be effectively meaningless, and that he would never have to reveal the remaining elements of his WMD programs. Only in 2002, when the Bush Administration suddenly focused its attention on Iraq, would Saddam have had any reason to change this view. And then, according to a variety of Iraqi sources, he simply refused to believe that the Americans were serious and would actually invade.

Another explanation should be posited. This is the notion that Saddam did not order the program scaled down, but Iraqi scientists ensured that it did not progress and deceived Saddam into believing that it was much further along than it in fact was. Numerous Iraqi scientists have claimed that although Saddam ordered them to produce particular things for the WMD programs, they dragged their feet or found other ways to avoid delivering them. There is most likely a germ of truth to these stories: prevarication on the part of some Iraqi scientists may have helped to account for the modest state of Iraq's WMD programs in 2003. But they probably form only a part of the explanation. Many of the accounts of scientists' quietly thwarting Saddam are undoubtedly self-serving, concocted in the aftermath of his defeat. As we have heard time and again from Iraqi defectors, those who did not meet Saddam's demands risked torture and murder for themselves and their families. We have consistently found that in Saddam's Iraq very few people took that risk.

One last element may also have been at work all along: the possibility that Saddam genuinely feared that the inspections were a cover for a CIA campaign to overthrow or assassinate him. The Iraqis repeatedly cited this fear in denying UNSCOM access to certain "sensitive" sites—particularly palaces—that were associated with Saddam personally. The rest of the world assumed that it was merely an excuse to keep inspectors out of places that contained evidence of WMD programs. However, the Iraqis may have been telling the truth on this point (and the initial debriefing of Saddam lends some credence to this scenario). After all, as various sources have now disclosed, the United States did run a covert-action campaign against Saddam, starting in 1991, and U.S. intelligence did use UNSCOM operations (without UNSCOM's knowledge) to gather intelligence for that campaign.

THE PERILS OF PREDICTION

Everyone outside Iraq missed the 1995–1996 shift in Saddam's strategy—that is, to scale back his WMD programs to minimize the odds of further discoveries—and assumed that Iraq's earlier behavior was continuing more or less in a straight line. This misperception took on considerable weight in the following years.

Context is crucial to understanding any intelligence assessment. No matter how objective the analyst may be, he or she begins with a set of basic assumptions that create a broad perspective on an issue; this helps the analyst to sort through evidence.

The context for the 2002 NIE assessment of Iraq's WMD programs began to take shape before the Gulf War. Prior to 1991 the intelligence communities in the United States and elsewhere believed that Iraq was at least five, and probably closer to ten, years away from acquiring a nuclear weapon. Of course, after the war we learned that in 1991 Iraq had been only six to twenty-four months away from having a workable nuclear weapon. This revelation stunned the analysts responsible for following the Iraqi nuclear program. The lessons they took from it were that Iraq was determined to acquire nuclear weapons and would go to any lengths to do so; that in pursuit of this goal Iraq was willing to use technology that Westerners considered crude and obsolete; that the Iraqis were superb at concealment and deception; and that inspections were inherently flawed—after all, there had been inspectors in Iraq prior to 1990, and they had been completely fooled.

These lessons were strongly reinforced by the revelation of Iraq's attempts in the first four years after the war to preserve significant parts of its WMD programs. By about 1994 UNSCOM believed, incorrectly, that it had largely disarmed Iraq; its members were privately discussing switching its operations from active inspections to passive monitoring. Many intelligence analysts in the United States, Britain, and Israel disagreed with UNSCOM's assessment, but they were hard-pressed to substantiate their suspicions—until Hussein Kamel's defection, in 1995, and subsequent Iraqi admissions regarding the extent of deception. These developments came as a profound shock to the UN inspectors, who resolved that Iraq could never again be trusted. Thus, just when Iraq was in all likelihood giving up efforts to maintain its just-in-time production capability, the rest of the world became hardened in its conviction that Saddam would never abandon or even reduce his efforts to acquire WMD.

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Another important contribution to the context is the continuation of Saddam's hostility toward the inspectors. If anything, the Iraqis became even less accommodating over time. By 1998 they were physically harassing the inspectors—on one occasion firing two rocket-propelled grenades into an UNSCOM building in Baghdad, on another grabbing the controls of an UNSCOM helicopter in flight and nearly causing it to crash. Western intelligence agencies understandably took these actions to mean that nothing in Saddam's weaponry plans had changed.

In December of 1998 the inspectors withdrew from the country. Their decision to do so came after Iraq announced, in August of that year, that it would no longer cooperate with them at all, and after repeated crises demonstrated that Baghdad's announcement was not just bluster.

The end of the UN inspections appears in retrospect to have been a much greater problem than anyone recognized at the time. The inspectors had been the best source of information on Iraq and its WMD programs. UNSCOM had a large and highly capable cadre of weapons specialists who focused exclusively on Iraq. Many Western intelligence agencies, faced with other issues that demanded their resources, increasingly relied on UNSCOM's data and assessments and did little to bolster their own (meager) capabilities in Iraq. And UNSCOM had something that American intelligence did not—physical access to Iraq. Without an embassy there it was very hard for U.S. case officers to penetrate the country.

The end of the inspections eliminated the single best means of vetting what information intelligence agencies could gather independently about Iraq. These agencies usually shared (in some form) new information or analyses about the WMD programs with UNSCOM. If a defector claimed that biological-weapons material was stored at a given site, inspectors would look for it. If satellite imagery indicated unusual activity at a particular location, inspectors would try to confirm it. Although Iraq's counterintelligence efforts were formidable (UNSCOM estimated that only six of its roughly 250 inspections actually caught the Iraqis by surprise), UNSCOM was usually able to gauge, if only broadly, whether a source or a deduction was correct.

When the inspectors suddenly left, the various intelligence agencies were caught psychologically and organizationally off balance. Desperate for information on Iraq, they began to trust sources that they would previously have had UNSCOM vet. If a defector came out of Iraq after 1998, the CIA had to gauge his credibility by comparing his account with those of other defectors—who might be unreliable or just unproven—or by checking it against whatever they could glean from satellites and other indirect sources. With so little to go on, intelligence agencies believed many reports that now seem deeply suspect.

In the absence of hard evidence, the intelligence analysts tended to fall back on the underlying assumptions they had begun with. Those assumptions included the belief that Saddam was determined to preserve his extant WMD capabilities and acquire new ones. And now there were no weapons inspectors to hinder him. The inspectors had also been a moderating influence on Western intelligence agencies; the information they provided, and the mere fact of their presence in Iraq, helped those agencies stick to reasonable suppositions and keep unsubstantiated fears at bay. After 1998 many analysts increasingly entertained worst-case scenarios—scenarios that gradually became mainstream estimates.

Another element that contributed to faulty assessments before the 2003 invasion was Iraqi rhetoric. Imagine that you were a CIA analyst in June of 2000 and heard Saddam make the following statement: "If the world tells us to abandon all our weapons and keep only swords, we will do that. We will destroy all the weapons, if they destroy their weapons. But if they keep a rifle and then tell me that I have the right to possess only a sword, then we would say no. As long as the rifle has become a means to defend our country against anybody who may have designs against it, then we will try our best to acquire the rifle." It would be very difficult not to interpret Saddam's remarks as an announcement that he intended to reconstitute his WMD programs.

The final element in the context for our pre-invasion analysis involved discrepancies between how much WMD material went into Iraq and how much Iraq could prove it had destroyed. Before the Gulf War (and to a certain extent afterward) Baghdad imported enormous quantities of equipment and raw materials for WMD. The UN inspectors, with remarkable diligence, obtained virtually all the import figures, either from the Iraqis or from their suppliers. They then asked the Iraqis to either produce the materials or account for their destruction. In many cases the Iraqis could not. The difference between what they had imported and what they could account for was seen as important evidence of an ambitious clandestine WMD program. These are the numbers—of bombs, of liters of precursor chemicals, and so on—that the world regularly heard Bush Administration officials intone during the run-up to the 2003 war.

In hindsight there are legitimate reasons to question these numbers. According to David Kay, a number of Iraqi sources have told the ISG that some of the material that was unaccounted for was diverted from the unilateral destructions that took place from 1991 to 1996. However, it is not clear whether or not any of that material was destroyed later. And it is likely that some of the discrepancies between UNSCOM and Iraqi figures are no more than the result of sloppiness. Saddam's Iraq was not exactly an efficient state, and many of his chief lieutenants were semi-literate thugs with no understanding of esoteric technical matters and little regard for how things should be done—their only concern was that Saddam's demands be met.

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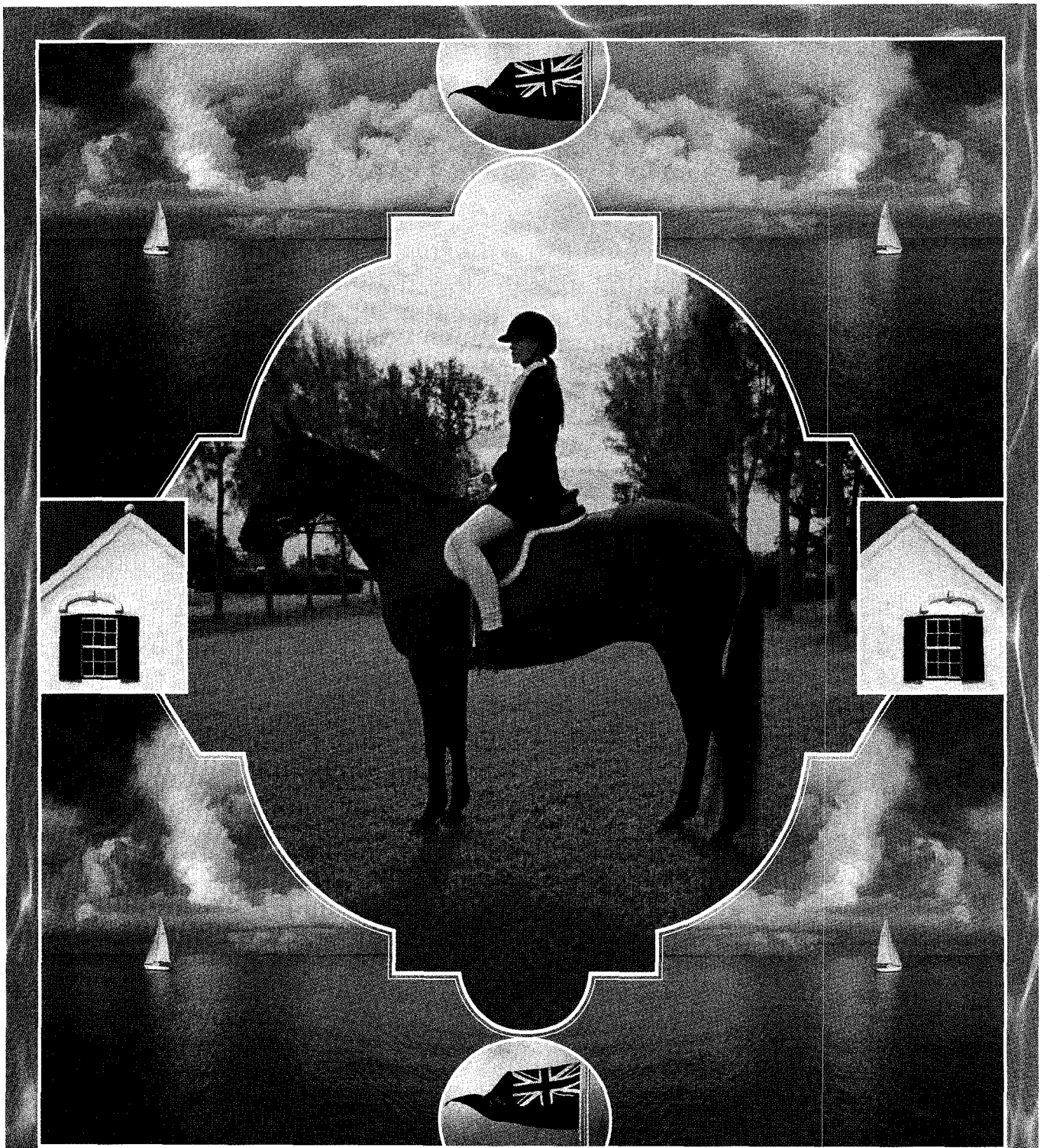

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THE POLITICS OF PERSUASION

The intelligence community's overestimation of Iraq's WMD capability is only part of the story of why we went to war last year. The other part involves how the Bush Administration handled the intelligence. Throughout the spring and fall of 2002 and well into 2003 I received numerous complaints from friends and colleagues in the intelligence community, and from people in the policy community, about precisely that. According to them, many Administration officials reacted strongly, negatively, and aggressively when presented with information or analysis that contradicted what they already believed about Iraq. Many of these officials believed that Saddam Hussein was the source of virtually all the problems in the Middle East and was an imminent danger to the United States because of his perceived possession of weapons of mass destruction and support of terrorism. Many also believed that CIA analysts tended to be left-leaning cultural relativists who consistently downplayed threats to the United States. They believed that the Agency, not the Administration, was biased, and that they were acting simply to correct that bias.

Intelligence officers who presented analyses that were at odds with the pre-existing views of senior Administration officials were subjected to barrages of questions and requests for additional information. They were asked to justify their work sentence by sentence: "Why did you rely on this source and not this other piece of information?" "How does this conclusion square with this other point?" "Please explain the history of Iraq's association with the organization you mention in this sentence." Reportedly, the worst fights were those over sources. The Administration gave greatest credence to accounts that presented the most lurid picture of Iraqi activities. In many cases intelligence analysts were distrustful of those sources, or knew unequivocally that they were wrong. But when they said so, they were not heeded; instead they were beset with further questions about their own sources.

On many occasions Administration officials' requests for additional information struck the analysts as being made merely to distract them from their primary mission. Some officials asked for extensive historical analyses—a hugely time-consuming undertaking, for which most intelligence analysts are not trained. Requests were constantly made for detailed analyses of newspaper articles that conformed to the views of Administration officials—pieces by conservative newspaper columnists such as Jim Hoagland, William Safire, and George F. Will. These columnists may be highly intelligent men, but they have no claim to superior insight into the workings of Iraq, or to any independent intelligence-collection capabilities.

Of course, no policymaker should accept intelligence estimates unquestioningly. While I was at the NSC, I regularly challenged analysts as to why they believed what they did. I asked for additional material and required them to do significant additional work. Any official who does less is derelict in his or her duty. However, at a certain point curiosity and diligence become a form of pressure. If your employer asks you every so often about your health and seems to take an appropriate interest in the answer, you probably feel that he or she is kind and considerate. If your employer asks you about your health every ten minutes, in highly detailed, probing questions, you may have a more nervous reaction.

As Seymour Hersh, among others, has reported, Bush Administration officials also took some actions that arguably crossed the line between rigorous oversight of the intelligence community and an attempt to manipulate intelligence. They set up their own shop in the Pentagon, called the Office of Special Plans, in order to sift through the information on Iraq themselves. To a great extent OSP personnel "cherry-picked" the intelligence they passed on, selecting reports that supported the Administration's pre-existing position and ignoring all the rest.

Most problematic of all, the OSP often chose to believe reports that trained intelligence officers considered unreliable or downright false. In particular it gave great credence to reports from the Iraqi National Congress, whose leader was the Administration-backed Ahmed Chalabi. It is true that the intelligence community believed some of the material that came from the INC—but not most of it. (In retrospect, of course, it seems that even the intelligence professionals gave INC reporting more credence than it deserved.) One of the reasons the OSP generally believed Chalabi and the INC was that they were telling it what it wanted to hear—giving the OSP, in a kind of vicious circle, further incentive to trust these sources over differing, and ultimately more reliable, ones. Thus intelligence analysts spent huge amounts of time fighting bad information and trying to persuade Administration officials not to make policy decisions based on it. From my own experience I know that it is hard enough to figure out what the reliable evidence indicates—and vast battles are fought over that. To have to also fight over what is clearly bad information is a Sisyphean task.

The Bush officials who created the OSP gave its reports directly to those in the highest levels of government, often passing raw, unverified intelligence straight to the Cabinet level as gospel. Senior Administration officials made public statements based on these reports—reports that the larger intelligence community knew to be erroneous (for instance, that there was hard and fast evidence linking Iraq to al-Qaeda). Another problem arising from the machinations of the OSP is that whenever the principals of the National Security Council met with the President and his staff, two completely different versions of reality were on the table. The CIA, the State Department, and the uniformed military services would present one version, consistent with the perspective of intelligence and foreign-policy professionals, and the Office of the Secretary of Defense and the Office of the Vice President would present another, based on the perspective of the OSP. These views were too far apart to allow for compromise. As a result, the Administration found it difficult, if

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not impossible, to make certain important decisions. And it made some that were fatally flawed, including many relating to postwar planning, when the OSP's view—that Saddam's regime simultaneously was very threatening and could easily be replaced by a new government—prevailed.

For the most part, the problems discussed so far have more to do with the methods of Administration officials than with their motives, which were often misguided and dangerous, but were essentially well-intentioned. The one action for which I cannot hold Administration officials blameless is their distortion of intelligence estimates when making the public case for going to war.

As best I can tell, these officials were guilty not of lying but of creative omission. They discussed only those elements of intelligence estimates that served their cause. This was particularly apparent in regard to the time frame for Iraq's acquisition of a nuclear weapon—the issue that most alarmed the American public and the rest of the world. Remember that the NIE said that Iraq was likely to have a nuclear weapon in five to seven years if it had to produce the fissile material indigenously, and that it might have one in less than a year if it could obtain the material from a foreign source. The intelligence community considered it highly unlikely that Iraq would be able to obtain weapons-grade material from a foreign source; it had been trying to do so for twenty-five years with no luck. However, time after time senior Administration officials discussed only the worst-case, and least likely, scenario, and failed to mention the intelligence community's most likely scenario. Some examples:

- In a radio address on September 14, 2002, President Bush warned, "Today Saddam Hussein has the scientists and infrastructure for a nuclear-weapons program, and has illicitly sought to purchase the equipment needed to enrich uranium for a nuclear weapon. Should his regime acquire fissile material, it would be able to build a nuclear weapon within a year."
- On October 7, 2002, the President told a group in Cincinnati, "If the Iraqi regime is able to produce, buy, or steal an amount of highly enriched uranium a little larger than a single softball, it could have a nuclear weapon in less than a year."
- On November 1, 2002, Undersecretary of State John Bolton told the Second Global Conference on Nuclear, Bio/Chem Terrorism, "We estimate that once Iraq acquires fissile material—whether from a foreign source or by securing the materials to build an indigenous fissile-material capability—it could fabricate a nuclear weapon within one year."
- Vice President Cheney said on NBC's *Meet the Press* on September 14, 2003, "The judgment in the NIE was that if Saddam could acquire fissile material, weapons-grade material, that he would have a nuclear weapon within a few months to a year. That was the judgment of the intelligence community of the United States, and they had a high degree of confidence in it."

None of these statements in itself was untrue. However, each told only a part of the story—the most sensational part. These statements all implied that the U.S. intelligence community believed that Saddam would have a nuclear weapon within a year unless the United States acted at once.

Some defenders of the Administration have reportedly countered that all it did was make the best possible case for war, playing a role similar to that of a defense attorney who is charged with presenting the best possible case for a client (even if the client is guilty). That is a false analogy. A defense attorney is responsible for presenting only one side of a dispute. The President is responsible for serving the entire nation. Only the Administration has access to all the information available to various agencies of the U.S. government—and withholding or downplaying some of that information for its own purposes is a betrayal of that responsibility.

WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

What we have learned about Iraq's WMD programs since the fall of Baghdad leads me to conclude that the case for war with Iraq was considerably weaker than I believed beforehand. Because of the consensus among American and foreign intelligence agencies, outside experts, and former UN weapons inspectors, I had been convinced that Iraq was only years away from having a nuclear weapon—probably only four or five years, as Robert Einhorn had testified. That estimate was clearly off, possibly by quite a bit. My reluctant conviction that war was our only option (although not at the time or in the manner in which the Bush Administration pursued it) was not entirely based on the nuclear threat, but that threat was the most important factor in it.

The war was not all bad. I do not believe that it was a strategic mistake, although the appalling handling of postwar planning was. There is no question that Saddam Hussein was a force for real instability in the Persian Gulf, and that his removal from power was a tremendous improvement. There is also no question that he was pure evil, and that he headed one of the most despicable regimes of the past fifty years. I am grateful that the United States no longer has to contend with the malign influence of Saddam's Iraq in this economically irreplaceable and increasingly fragile part of the world; nor can I begrudge the Iraqi people one day of their freedom. What's more, we should not forget that containment *was* failing. The shameful performance of the United Nations Security Council members (particularly France and Germany) in 2002–2003 was final proof that containment would not have lasted much longer; Saddam would eventually have reconstituted his WMD programs, although further in the future than we had thought. That said, the case for war—and for war sooner rather than later—was certainly less compelling than it appeared at the time. At the very least we should recognize that the Administration's rush to war was reckless even on the basis of what we thought we knew in March of 2003. It

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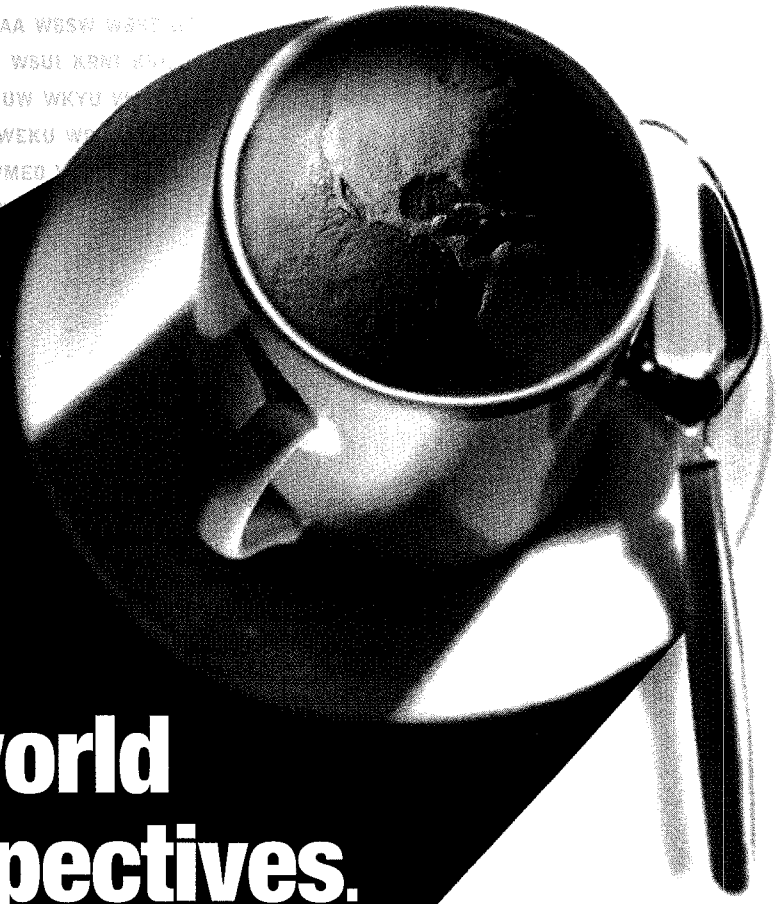

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appears even more reckless in light of what we know today.

The problems that led to our mistaken beliefs about the threat posed by Iraq's weapons of mass destruction must be addressed immediately. Unfortunately, to some extent the problems are contradictory, and therefore the solutions may work against one another. For example, a remedy used in the past to address influence from the executive branch on the intelligence process has been to increase oversight of intelligence operations and analysis by Congress. However, in this instance increasing congressional oversight could have exacerbated another problem: the failure of the intelligence community to sufficiently challenge its own assumptions about Saddam's strategy. The more that intelligence agencies must report to both Congress and the White House, the more they fear becoming a political football, and the more they will tone down their estimates, stick to mainstream judgments, and avoid taking controversial positions. Arguing that Iraq had minimized its WMD holdings after 1996 would have been a very controversial position indeed.

Some of the problems that led to our misunderstanding of Iraq's WMD may be insoluble, at least by bureaucratic changes. The forms of pressure exerted on the intelligence community by the Bush Administration were perfectly legal; it would probably be impossible to regulate against them. Moreover, doing so could preclude useful and necessary questioning of intelligence analysts by Administration officials. Still, some fixes do suggest themselves.

In the future we as a nation must be willing to devote enough resources to intelligence so that we will always be able to sustain a large, aggressive program to collect all manner of information and a sophisticated analysis program on all high-priority issues. In retrospect, our over-reliance on UNSCOM inspectors lulled us into a false sense of security; this in turn contributed to our inflated estimates of Iraq's WMD progress after 1998. Even though Iraq was a difficult environment for any intelligence service to operate in, and the CIA did devote substantial assets to it at all times, it would have made some difference if the Agency could have devoted still greater resources to it, even when that seemed redundant with UNSCOM's missions.

Our failings in the WMD experience also argue for a more powerful and independent director of central intelligence. The DCI currently serves at the pleasure of the President, and although he is the nominal head of the entire intelligence community, in reality he does not have much authority over most of the intelligence agencies, whose budgets and personnel come largely from the Department of Defense. The United States could make the DCI position similar to that of the director of the FBI: the President would nominate a candidate who would then need to be confirmed by Congress, and who would serve a fixed term. And the DCI could be made the true head of intelligence, with control over the budgets and personnel of all the intelligence agencies. Many of the intelligence agencies that currently report to the Secretary of Defense, including the National Security Agency and the National Reconnaissance Office, to name just two, should instead report to the DCI. These changes would put the DCI in a stronger position to resist pressure from the executive branch (or Congress) and to protect his people from the same.

Strengthening the DCI and increasing his independence might make for smarter, bolder analysis. The less intelligence analysts have to worry that the DCI is going to take heat for unpopular if accurate judgments, the more willing they will be to make them. This is not a slur against DCI George Tenet, who I think handled the difficulties of his situation extraordinarily well. But it is a recognition that DCIs must not be put in the position that Tenet was forced into.

Another step worth considering is forbidding the CIA or anyone else in government from making any intelligence estimates public for five or ten years. As someone firmly committed to the concept of open government, who believes that the CIA has benefited from its efforts in the past decade to be more open to the public, I dislike the idea of greater secrecy. However, when intelligence estimates become public, they have a huge impact on the course of foreign-policy debates, and administrations therefore find themselves with a great incentive to make sure the Agency's estimates support the Administration's preferred policy. If such estimates were not made public, an administration would have little reason to try to influence them. The government could still produce white papers, but they should come from the State Department—the agency that is, after all, officially charged with public diplomacy.

The exaggerated estimates of Iraq's WMD will loom over future diplomatic discussions. No foreigner trusts U.S. intelligence to get it right anymore, or trusts the Bush Administration to tell the truth.

Finally, the U.S. government must admit to the world that it was wrong about Iraq's WMD and show that it is taking far-reaching action to correct the problems that led to this error. Iraq is not going to be the last foreign-policy challenge in which we must make choices based on ambiguous evidence. When the United States confronts future challenges, the exaggerated estimates of Iraq's WMD will loom like an ugly shadow over the diplomatic discussions. Fairly or not, no foreigner trusts U.S. intelligence to get it right anymore, or trusts the Bush Administration to tell the truth. The only way that we can regain the world's trust is to demonstrate that we understand our mistakes and have changed our ways. ■

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A FAMILY DEPOSITION

BY BEN BIRNBAUM

.....

"At that time, they stole from the Pharaonic Egyptians gold, jewelry, cooking utensils, silver ornaments, clothing, and more, leaving Egypt in the middle of the night with all this wealth . . ."

—Nabil Hilmi, dean of law, University of Al-Zaqaziq, interviewed in the August 9, 2003, edition of the Egyptian newspaper Al-Ahram Al-Arabi *regarding a lawsuit "against all the Jews of the world" for alleged misappropriations during their exodus from Egypt, in 1230 B.C.*

ERIC HANSEN

TRANSCRIBED FROM THE DEPOSITION OF BEN BIRNBAUM, *Defendant 571,224*

First, in regard to the earrings. Mrs. Ramses, who lived down the hall, gave them to my ancestor Chavah (Cleopatra) Birnbaum the night before we left. I know what you're thinking, but it's not *that* Ramses family. Ramses was a common name in Egypt, very big in personal hygiene. In fact, they had a Jewish saying back then that even when you were alone with your wife in the bedroom, there was probably a Ramses somewhere in the picture, if you get my meaning. I hope that doesn't offend the stenographer. At the time, they used predominantly papyrus in their products, which is why we had such big families. But we never sued. I feel I should point that out.

Anyway, we're getting ready for the Exodus, baking matzoh and macaroons like crazy, and Mrs. Ramses runs in. "What's going on?" she says. "Such a tumult in the building!"

My ancestor Menasheh (Menes IV) Birnbaum, Chavah's husband, explains to her, "It's not personal, but apparently we've been promised a land, and you know how it is, just to put together a down payment on a decent co-op in this market is impossible, and especially with the slave wages."

"Look," Mrs. Ramses says, "you can't go empty-handed." Next thing you know, she's handing the gold earrings to Chavah, who'd just started in on the tzimmes. Hugging, tears, prunes and carrots. A mess. That's the earrings.

In the matter of the egg cups. The fact is, we were leaving the building, and there they were on the street, out with the recyclable vessels. One cup was chipped, and another was missing from the set, but otherwise they were in okay shape. So my ancestor Tevyeh (Tutankhamen) Birnbaum, Menasheh's son—he grabbed them. "We can eat a decent breakfast on the side of the road and we won't have to pay restaurant prices for a boiled egg," he said. But Tevyeh wasn't as smart as he thought. They were *ibis* egg cups! Show me where you find an ibis in Tel Aviv and subsequently Brooklyn. And then there's the matter of the sterling-silver fruit knife. That I can't explain, I have to admit. But I'm happy to send it back. Three thousand years, and we used it four times.

As far as the statue of the fat lady rubbing herself with a radish goes, that wasn't us. That was the Gordons. The Gordons were Naphtalites, so enough said. But very clever with their hands. The Birnbaums saw nothing in the piece, even Tevyeh. But Kishkeh (Karnak) Gordon turns it into a lantern that runs on camel dung or olive oil. In 1966 the statue was still in their hands, by the way, and I know because I myself saw it in the Gordon apartment, 156th off Grand Concourse. It was on the mahjong table, mint condition. The only thing was that now it was electric, with a wire running out, and instead of the radish there was Bing Crosby's head. Look, I don't make this up. I'm just here to give my testimony.

So now the towel in the hall closet. Let me take you back to the Exodus, day three, outside Memphis. Already it's apparent that Moses is a very gifted guy but no sense of direction, and worse, he wouldn't stop at an oasis to ask. You'd try to tell him something, he'd say, "What are you, a burning bush?" So we knew we were in for it. Anyway, my ancestor Abe (Anthony) Kerry, Menasheh's nephew through his sister Sadie (Nasheeka), he says, "I'm already clamped up from the matzoh, and there's sand in my phylacteries, and this guy could drag us around the desert for forty years for all we know" (that got a big laugh, by the way), "so tonight I'm going to a hotel and I'll get a nice meal with leaven and some wine that doesn't taste like Log Cabin syrup, and I'll have a shrimp-cocktail appetizer, too, because the way our luck is running, someone's going to think up kosher any day." Which is why, to this day, you snoop around a Jewish bureau or highboy and sure, you might find an item that says "Hotel Memphis," and maybe it's made of Egyptian cotton. But even with this you can't jump to conclusions, because in fact it could be Tennessee.

My sister-in-law's crocodile purse I'm not even going to dignify with a response.

Ben Birnbaum is the editor of Boston College Magazine *and the special assistant to the president of Boston College. His work has been anthologized in* Best American Essays *and* Best Spiritual Writing.

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SPEAKING OF THE CANDIDATES

Our correspondent looks much too closely at the current crop of stump speeches

BY P. J. O'ROURKE

Illustrations by Steve Brodner

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We all know what it is that politicians talk a lot of. But it's worthwhile, especially in a presidential-election cycle, to examine stool specimens. George Bush says, "Our Founders dedicated this country to the cause of human dignity, the rights of every person, and the possibilities of every life." The job is to find the disclaimer: "See Alien and Sedition Acts for further details. Offer not valid for slaves, Indians, women, and persons without property in the following thirteen states."

Howard Dean says, "The idea of America using its power solely for its own ends is not consistent with the idealistic moral force the world has known for over two centuries." We sort through 227 years of moral account ledgers and read the accompanying British, Mexican, Sioux, and Spanish auditors' notes.

John Kerry talks about "the soaring aspirations of America." We ponder how much of America's greatness is owed to pedestrian aspirations, such as the Heinz family's dream of starting a ketchup company. As aspirations soar (in Manifest Destiny, Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points, and the purchase of AOL Time Warner stock), Icarus moments occur.

Voters are not really expected to pay attention to the grandiloquence. And candidates are not really expected to produce it. That is, candidates—major candidates, anyway—don't write their own speeches. Custom dictates that others take no credit for doing so. And the candidates cannot be said to "give speeches," as that phrase was understood from the dawn of language until Roosevelt and Churchill. The public-speaking skills of the presidential candidates (Al Sharpton always excepted) are such that orations are more discarded than given, delivered in the paper-boy-and-porch-roof manner, a kind of campaign litter. Still, it's important to check what the candidates are saying, as opposed to what commentators say the candidates are saying—and, indeed, as opposed to what the candidates say they are saying when they are called to account for what they say. Thus the printed transcripts of thirty-six speeches by ten candidates have been read. Analysis of the contents may provide a lesson in contemporary democracy, or ("What we need most immediately is a sense of immediacy"—Joe Lieberman) it may not.

P. J. O'Rourke is a correspondent for The Atlantic. *His satirical survey of American politics,* Parliament of Whores *(1991), has recently been reissued.*

Among those who aren't listening to the candidates are, it would seem, the candidates. John Kerry claims, "I will live to the principle that I learned in Vietnam: the United States of America should never, ever go to war because we want to; we should only go to war because we have to." But where would that have left Korea? Where will it leave Liberia? And what if we don't really have to go, but we want to go because if we don't go now we'll really, really have to go later? Adhering to the principle that Kerry learned in Vietnam (and that children refuse to learn on long car trips), the world got World War II.

George Bush states, "It's a different kind of war than we're used to in America ... It's a war in which we will hunt down those who hate America, one person at a time." The snotty waiter at the Brasserie Lipp, in Paris, who brought me a Scotch and warm water—he's next.

Joe Lieberman—perhaps the last person one would think of as channeling Jerry Brown—professes, "Science has taught us that ... everything must be understood holistically, as part of symbiotic, ever changing ecosystems."

The relationship of political speaking to truth is complex, although not close. "There are some eighty thousand chemicals registered for use in the United States," says John Kerry, "and each

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day we are exposed to hundreds, even thousands, of them." Carbon dioxide, for example, is blowing through our noses this very minute.

But candidates do not tell outright lies. Except when they do. "I believe," John Edwards says, "we can give paid leave to millions of families without adding a burden to businesses." It is just possible that this is a true statement of Edwards's belief, but Edwards also has a higher-education plan: "I call it College for Everyone." Mike Tyson?

Sometimes it's not certain who's lying, but logic indicates that someone is trying to. Of the recession John Kerry says, "Never before in our country has there been an economic reversal this dramatic and this fast." George Bush says, "The recession was one of the shortest and shallowest in modern American history."

More common than lies are vague generalities, in which candidates sometimes tangle themselves by Brer Rabbit means. "We cannot talk vague generalities," John Kerry says, immediately after saying, "We don't have to choose between jobs and the environment. Protecting the environment is jobs—the high-value-added jobs of the future."

Just when one's vision blurs with indefiniteness, and particularities become one's dearest wish, they arrive—the way wishes did in the tale "The Monkey's Paw." Dick Gephardt details his program "to scrap the vast majority of the Bush tax cuts for wealthier Americans and corporations." Wealthier Americans and corporations, he says, will be required to provide health-care coverage to every employee. "My plan," Gephardt says, "then gives tax credits to cover most of the cost." This, says Gephardt, will result in "stimulating one of the biggest sectors of our private economy"—that sector being, evidently, illness and injuries. There will also be "tax incentives for a new generation of automobiles." Good news for those of us whose Bush tax cut barely equaled a down payment on a Lincoln Navigator. And we *will* be buying American. Gephardt intends to "establish an international minimum wage." Gephardt will "create a single pension plan that follows you from the moment you're born to the moment you retire." He says, "You'll get every penny of your retirement savings, no matter how often you change jobs." This is like Social Security privatization but better, because Gephardt is a Democrat, so you'll get Social Security, too. Gephardt wants preschool "for every child" and also postschool, "a safe, educational place to go between the hours when school's out but parents are still at work." Underschool and overschool are next, to keep the rest of us off the streets. As for the new Detroit iron we'll get to buy during the Gephardt Administration, the candidate says, "Industry is already working toward totally hydrogen-powered cars … So what are we waiting for? The next spike in oil prices? The next gasoline crisis?" The *Hindenburg* to land? Plus, Gephardt says, "I'll launch an aggressive new Apollo Project … to achieve true energy independence."

Coincidentally, John Kerry has the same idea. He says that "developing new energy technologies … will take a commitment as broad and bold as sending a man to the moon." Meanwhile, Joe Lieberman calls for "the Manhattan Project of our generation … establishing America's energy independence."

The candidates do not pause to consider what the Manhattan and Apollo projects accomplished—the obliteration of Hiroshima, and several fellows on a rock—and compare this with what Henry Ford did tinkering in the barn. The candidates are too busy giving spiels intended to make the voter think, "Aha! The pea is under that *specific* walnut shell." As John Edwards puts it, "For families of teachers, nurses, and police officers who can't afford to save right now, we'll cut the capital-gains rate in half on gains up to ten thousand dollars held for at least three years." Miss Smithfield, who teaches third grade, made $10,000 in the stock market. Check the kids' lunch money.

Reading the candidates' speeches, one's mind wanders. And one's mind is not alone in its meandering. The whole nation seems to have drifted away from the candidates. "I want my country back," says Howard Dean. "I'm running for President to turn America around," says John Kerry.

And around and around, it could be argued, although not about Kerry alone. One might almost say of all the candidates that "false rhetoric becomes a substitute for meeting the reality of our challenges." But Kerry, who actually does say that, provides the best examples: "They talk about heroes in New York City … But let me remind those Republicans of something: every single one of those firefighters, every single one of those police officers, every single one of those emergency medical personnel … were members of organized labor."

The others can't compete. "We cannot cover the holes in our borders with plastic sheeting," says John Edwards.

The campaign rhetoric may be a thing seen through a roll of polyethylene, darkly, but the campaign issues are clear enough. They are Iraq, the economy, and health care—the last a sure sign that the Baby Boom has matured and gone from navel gazing to colonoscopies.

The candidates take an expansive view of helping the poor to pay for medical care. Howard Dean announces that in Vermont "we have made Medicaid into a middle-class entitlement." John Kerry says, "I'm running to make health

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care in America a right and not a privilege." As usual, Al Sharpton puts it best: "If Charlton Heston can have a constitutional right to carry a rifle, why can't Grandma have a constitutional right to health care?" It's probably in the Declaration of Independence, with the other unalienable rights—"among these are Life, Liberty, and getting someone else to pay when we go to the doctor." And to the drugstore. George Bush says, "All seniors should have help in buying prescription drugs." Warren Buffett presumably included.

Bush may be taking some pretty good prescription drugs himself, because he says he has "[a] vision that will make health care positive, and optimistic, and hopeful for all our citizens."

Joe Lieberman is having visions too:

"... a new plan called MediKids."

"I call this plan MediChoice."

"I'll lead us to a better way—by creating the American Center for Cures."

"My plan," he says, "will cover more people than the plans of Dick Gephardt, Howard Dean, or John Kerry—and we will spend less money for each newly insured person than any other presidential candidate's plan." Then, lest we think he's way out there, broadcasting from Planet Lieberman, Joe delivers this clincher: "That's not my analysis. It's the conclusion of a widely respected independent health-care expert, Dr. Ken Thorpe, of Emory University, in Atlanta."

The candidates are concerned about our medical condition. The candidates are caring people. But aren't we all? George Bush says, "Our Medicare system is a binding commitment of a caring society." It's not just a way to buy off Mom and Dad and keep them from bugging us for help with their doctor bills.

But the fact that candidates care about us so much raises a larger question. What if a total stranger—who was not a presidential candidate—rang your doorbell and told you, as John Edwards does, that he cares about your children's receiving unsolicited e-mails, "many of them pornographic and some of them violent."

"More and more children," this stranger continues, "are first learning about sex not from a parent, or even from a peer, but from some e-mail that is totally inappropriate." Depending on the gun laws in your state, you'd at least call 911.

Mainstream Democratic candidates don't advocate spending—just investing. "Invest in education," says Dick Gephardt. John Kerry says, "We should be investing ten thousand dollars a year for a young person's future with early-childhood education, child care, Head Start, Smart Start, Healthy Start ..."

George Bush, however, thinks that people should make their own bad investments. "The best and fairest way," he says, "to make sure Americans have ... money is not to tax it away." He's going to give us money by not taking it. The other candidates do not point out that this sounds like a protection racket. They favor tax cuts too.

"In a recession you should cut taxes."—Joe Lieberman

"I'm going to cut them."—John Edwards

"I think some tax cuts were a good idea."—Howard Dean

"As House majority leader, I led the fight to ... cut taxes for working families."—Dick Gephardt

Even Al Sharpton is concerned about high taxes: "Tax cuts on a national level force the states to increase state tax on property, sales tax, mass transit, which is just shifting the burden to working-class people."

That is to say, and Joe Lieberman says it, "The real question is what kind of taxes you cut." Howard Dean objects to the kind of cuts "forty percent of which go to people making more than three hundred and fifty thousand dollars a year." Not that the candidates (Al Sharpton always excepted) want to soak the rich or start class warfare. "Mind you," says Dick Gephardt, "I'm all for helping wealthy Americans grow our economy." And thanks to his remarkable caring, his extraordinary empathy, Gephardt is actually able to get inside the heads of wealthy Americans and learn their true feelings: "But doling out tax cuts they don't want or need is not the way to do it."

"We should cut taxes, but we shouldn't cut and run from our values when we do," says John Edwards. What each candidate values the most is the good will of the particular subset of voters who might conceivably vote for him. George Bush is blunt about it: "Tax relief is for everyone who pays income taxes."

The unemployed, with no income to be taxed, have to seek relief elsewhere. The Democratic candidates are optimistic about unemployment numbers. Wesley Clark says America has "lost 2.7 million jobs." John Kerry says, "Since George Bush took office, we have lost nearly three million jobs." John Edwards says, "We've lost 3.1 million private-sector jobs." Do I hear 3.2? Going, going for 3.1 ...

The Democratic candidates also make much of the growing federal deficit. John Kerry preaches the virtues of "restoring fiscal discipline." John Edwards vows to "restore fiscal discipline." Joe Lieberman swears we must "re-apply real fiscal discipline."

The deficit, tax cuts for Republicans, and unemployment are squished together in what might seem to be mere electioneering goo. But, as Ecclesiastes says, "A good name is better than precious ointment." "The economics of debt

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and regret" is Dick Gephardt's name for it: "Unaffordable tax cuts for the few. Zero new jobs. Surging unemployment."

The Democratic candidates are opposed to the economics of debt and regret. John Edwards talks about some tax cuts that he certainly won't give to "the wealthiest one third of one percent of taxpayers." Edwards says, "We'll use the money not for new programs ..." That would be a violation of Fiscal Discipline. Fortunately, Edwards doesn't have to use tax-cut money for new programs. "We'll give struggling families ... a five-thousand-dollar tax credit toward the down payment on their first home," he says. Tax credits are different from government spending, because the government never got the money, so you can't say the government spent it. And tax credits are different from tax cuts because it says so right there in what the things are called: tax credits. "We'll provide a new progressive tax credit to promote investment, savings, and wealth creation for working Americans," Edwards says. Edwards also wants a "Family Leave Tax Credit"; he says, "We should extend some family-leave rights to parents in small businesses."

I myself am a parent in a small business. Number of employees: one. I look forward to exercising my family-leave rights but worry that this expansion of economic fairness and social justice may leave me among the 2.7, nearly 3, or 3.1 million Americans for whom a credit toward income tax is a moot point.

Joe Lieberman wants a "New Jobs Tax Credit." Dick Gephardt says, "We should provide a tax credit to every family and business who buys fuel-cell technology." Those who want old-fashioned, big-government, New Deal/Fair Deal greenback spending will just have to vote for George Bush. Bush takes up Gephardt's hydrogen challenge and pledges "1.2 billion dollars in research funding so that America can lead the world in developing ... hydrogen-powered automobiles." In just such a manner, in 1950, the Truman Administration pledged funding so that America could lead the world in developing the hydrogen ... Never mind. Bush promises to fight drug addiction with "a new six-hundred-million-dollar program to help an additional three hundred thousand Americans receive treatment." (The President would be well advised—no matter what the 300,000 drug addicts say about getting treatment first thing in the morning—not to give them the $600 million in cash.) And Bush proposes "a new approach to helping unemployed Americans through Personal Re-employment Accounts," saying that "Americans who face the greatest difficulties in finding work will receive up to three thousand dollars to use in their job search ... If the job is obtained quickly ... the worker will be able to keep the cash balance as a 'Re-employment Bonus.'" Job-hopping from KFC to Wendy's on a weekly basis, you could make $156,000 a year.

Under George Bush the deficit is growing, and—Bush is proud to say—not only the federal deficit. "Low interest rates have allowed Americans to tap the rising values of their homes," Bush says. "In 2002 refinancings added more than a hundred billion dollars to American pocketbooks." Bush, of course, will be relieved of responsibility for the national debt in 2008 at the latest. We'll still be paying off the second mortgage.

Bush is not the only throwback to previous political-economic eras. Joe Lieberman wants "tax incentives and regulatory reforms to encourage the deployment of the next-generation Internet." He says, "Broadband can bring on a broad-based boom across dozens of industries." Someone should tell Lieberman about 2001.

The candidates have bad economic plans—except for Wesley Clark, who doesn't have a plan at all. "Why has America lost the prospect of a five-trillion-dollar surplus," he asks, "and turned it into a five-trillion-dollar deficit? ... We're going to seek out the facts, search for the causes, to find the solutions ..." What am I saying? I mean to find out.

Wesley Clark presents similar penetrating insights about Iraq: "For the first time since the 1960s and early seventies more than a hundred thousand American troops are fighting abroad, and once again at home Americans are concerned about their civil liberties." He's working himself up to use the "Vietnam" word.

For the major Democratic candidates, Iraq is the Sharper Image airport-store issue—a big, attractive thingamajig with lots of intriguing features. But there may be baggage problems. And what do you really do with it when you get it home?

If you're a Democratic candidate who more or less supported the war, you accuse George Bush of losing the peace, as Joe Lieberman does: "The opportunity to build a more stable and democratic Iraq ... is now in jeopardy." (Lieberman does not say this in a speech; he says it in a July 7, 2003, op-ed in *The Washington Post*. But the *Washington Post* op-ed page is a stump, if anything is.) Lieberman then goes on to indignantly demand that the Bush Administration do pretty much what the Bush Administration is doing: "commit more U.S. troops," create "an Iraqi interim authority," "work with the Iraqi people and the United Nations." Lieberman does, however, call for NATO "to assume command of the forces in

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Iraq," because "as we saw in Kosovo, it works." Kosovo sent the world a message: wherever there is oppression, suffering, and injustice, NATO will show up six months late and bomb the country next to where it's happening.

John Kerry gets into a Clintonlike debate with himself about what he means. "I voted to threaten the use of force to make Saddam Hussein comply with the resolutions of the United Nations," Kerry says. "But it was wrong to rush to war ..."

Dick Gephardt, talking about international cooperation in Iraq, manages to mean even less than Kerry: "We need a President who ... will lead by real leadership."

John Edwards focuses on domestic-security issues, saying, "We will not allow John Ashcroft to use the war on terrorism to take away our rights, take away our liberties, and take away our freedom!" No, that would be John Edwards's job. Edwards proposes legislation that would create a Homeland Intelligence Agency, "for collecting foreign intelligence inside the United States," and advocates a "neighborhood-watch program" to "help prevent both terrorism and ordinary crime." The people heading the neighborhood-watch programs would bear absolutely no resemblance to the Communist Party "block captains" in Cuba. "In addition," Edwards says, "there is still a serious question whether people will get the information they need when they need it, particularly when they are sleeping ... So I have a bill ... that will create an emergency warning system to reach everyone using new technology—for example, special phone rings that could wake people."

Or you can offer an alternative approach. Howard Dean wants a Cold War on terrorism. "We destroyed the repressive communist regimes without firing a shot, not simply by having a strong military, but because we had a better ideal to show the world." Dean does not specify what the better ideal is that we'll show the terrorists. But perhaps we can guess. Dean quotes, with admiration, John Winthrop, the theocratic Puritan governor of Massachusetts Bay Colony. Maybe we should tell the terrorists, "You're religious nuts—*we're* religious nuts!"

Rhetorically, George Bush possesses the advantage on the Iraq issue. He has what the bomb tossers of the nineteenth century called "propaganda of the deed." He can just keep killing people until November.

The minor candidates also have an advantage, since there's not the slightest chance they'll have to do anything they say. It's not an advantage they take. Carol Moseley Braun says, "I believe women have a contribution to make to move our country toward peace ... Women can show Americans that we are clever enough to defeat terror without destroying our own liberty, that we can provide for long-term security by making peace everybody's business. We can show the world that we are creative enough to brave today's challenges." Elect me because women are clever, creative busybodies. This is the "Lucy and Ethel Get an Idea" platform.

Al Sharpton pleads for "a policy of befriending and creating allies around the world." (He advocates this in an NPR interview. I count it as a speech because Sharpton's off-the-cuff comments are better crafted than the scripted declamations of the other candidates and because, frankly, Al Sharpton is always giving a speech.) The way Sharpton intends to make friends is by fixing the world's sinks and toilets. "There are 1.7 billion people," he says, "that need clean water, almost three billon that need sanitation systems ... I would train engineers ... would export people that would help with these things."

Dennis Kucinich wants to "make nonviolence an organizing principle in our society." Our troops in Iraq will stage lunch-counter sit-ins. Kucinich promises to establish "a Cabinet-level Department of Peace." The Secretary of Peace will do for international understanding what the Postmaster General does for mail.

Kucinich, speaking in Seattle, says, "A few years ago I could smell the dynamic tension between the claims of the community and the claims of the free market in the tear gas that invaded the locked-down lobby of this very hotel." He's probably crazy. But the purpose here is not to compare the candidates, much less to rate them. Rather, the purpose is to do what young people call "sampling" (and the recording industry calls "theft"). Still, it would take more-than-human self-restraint to spend hour upon dreary hour studying the candidates' bombast without forming a few subjective and doubtless manifestly unfair (and grumpy) opinions.

The unlikely candidates are very unlikely. Al Sharpton indeed wants to give Granny (and everyone else) a constitutional right to health care, plus a constitutional right to education and a constitutional right to vote that Sharpton seems certain isn't in the Constitution. If I understand the workings of the American legal system, this would let me sue, on grounds of violation of my constitutional rights, any time I get sick or stupid or move to Palm Beach County, Florida.

"Nobody who looks like me has ever been President of

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the United States," says Carol Moseley Braun. That is her platform. It's time to elect a black woman President. Moseley Braun may be right, but she's opening herself to a two-word Republican quasher: Condoleezza Rice.

At a meeting of the Democratic National Committee's western caucus, Dennis Kucinich reads a poem of his own composition about the California energy crisis. He calls it "The Haiku of Hegemony."

> Plotting gains.
> False-promise low rates,
> Political contributions place.
> Regulatory controls erase.
> Energy supplies manipulate.

And so on for another ten lines. Kucinich is not much of a haiku master, or much of a presidential candidate, but he's not a bad Beat poet, compared with Lawrence Ferlinghetti.

George Bush argues too often from the anecdote. "These are just a handful of the stories, which are true and real," he says. They're not. Bush tells about meeting a doctor who had been running a successful pain-management clinic, but the doctor's liability-insurance premiums became so high that the doctor had to move to another city and go to work for a hospital. How do we know the doctor wasn't lying? Maybe the doctor was selling Rush Limbaugh scripts for OxyContin and had to go on the lam. Assuming the doctor was telling the truth, how do we know that Bush wasn't talking to one physician with a darn bad insurance agent? If arguing from anecdote is just a rhetorical flourish for Bush, it is a tired one. Reagan and Clinton wore it out. If arguing from anecdote is a reflection of how Bush thinks, then his thinking is worse than political—it's journalistic.

John Edwards also employs the anecdote. But his do not need to be tested for truth. They make no point whatsoever: "Kashya Morrison is a single mom with two kids who works two jobs and studies finance at Montreat College. She commutes over a hundred miles every day … She'd love to see her kids in a good after-school program, but she can't afford it … so her grandparents watch her kids, just like mine watched me."

And Edwards turned out fine. I guess.

Among the noises made by Howard Dean is the clank of rods being bound into a cylindrical bundle with an ax in the middle. Dean, slightly misquoting John Winthrop, says, "We shall be as one. We must delight in each other, make others' conditions our own; rejoice together, mourn together, labor and suffer together, always living before our eyes our commission and community in our work." Dean says, "Any competent, qualified kindergarten teacher can tell you who the five kids in his or her class are that are most likely to end up in prison." He cites a Vermont state program whereby "every child … gets a home visit within two weeks of their birth." "It is really not a child-raising police," Dean feels compelled to say.

John Kerry has no sense of humor—not that any of the other candidates do (Al Sharpton always excepted). Kerry, announcing his candidacy, begins to tell a joke that he doesn't seem to realize is an anti-FDR gibe: "Five thousand years ago Moses said, 'Hitch up your camel, pick up your shovel, mount your ass, and I will lead you to the Promised Land.' Five thousand years later Franklin Roosevelt said, 'Light up a Camel, lay down your shovel, sit on your ass. This is the Promised Land.'" Then Kerry, with comedy-club open-mike-night doggedness, just keeps going. "Today George Bush will lay off your camel, tax your shovel, kick your ass, and tell you there is no Promised Land."

Joe Lieberman needs a few lessons in the soft sell. Decrying the high cost of medical care, he says, "I'll rein in the runaway prices we pay … I'll squeeze out inefficiencies … My plan will cut medical errors in half within five years." Lieberman may be able to keep these promises—but he'll have to kill the sickest 50 percent of Americans by 2010.

Dick Gephardt has too many ideas.

And Wesley Clark has too few. Although that may be unfair. By the time you read this, Wesley Clark may have presented the nation with a wise, cogent, and detailed policy prospectus. But no matter how wise and cogent Clark may get, or how quickly, he presents a problem. History's richest and most powerful nation is choosing, by democratic means, one person to be its political leader, its head of state, and its commander-in-chief. A popular and respected aspirant to this grave honor states why he should be elected. Wesley Clark's speech lasts less than five minutes and contains the following:

"We're going to run a campaign that will move this country forward, not back."

"We'll ask the tough questions as we move forward."

"And together we're going to march forward, forward with a new vision, forward to bring our children and grandchildren into a future …"

"We're … moving forward."

History backs away, keeping both hands visible, avoiding sudden movements, and trying not to show fear. ▲

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IN SEARCH OF THE ELUSIVE SWING VOTER

It almost doesn't matter who the Democratic candidate is. In terms of strategy, the road map for the coming presidential campaign was set long before the primaries—and it runs straight through the handful of states with the largest numbers of independent voters. Any candidate needs to hunt them down

BY JOSHUA GREEN

Illustration by Steve Brodner

During the primary season we are accustomed to focusing on the drama and intrigue in a few important states such as New Hampshire and Iowa. A candidate who can win these, it is believed, is all but certain to carry the nomination. Suddenly that's less true than in years past. Because so many candidates are running, and because the contests are not winner-take-all, formerly inconsequential states such as Oklahoma, New Mexico, and even Delaware could be critical in determining who finally emerges as the next Democratic nominee. In contrast, we tend to view the general election as wide open, when in fact fewer and fewer states have determined the outcome in recent presidential elections. The reason for this is the growing polarization of the American electorate.

In fact, there is empirical evidence to suggest that this year's contest may be the most partisan in history. In the 2000 election less than 10 percent of Democrats voted for George W. Bush, and a similarly small percentage of Republicans voted for Al Gore—the lowest voter crossover ever documented. The Supreme Court's decision in *Bush* v. *Gore*, the Bush Administration's hard-nosed tactics, and the war in Iraq have only widened this divide.

As the American electorate becomes ever more polarized, the number of undecided voters and the number of states in which the two parties will truly compete have diminished considerably. Two decades ago as much as a third of the electorate was deemed to be in play, and there were grand debates, particularly in the Democratic Party, about whether the best way to win "swing" voters was to pursue a southern strategy or to target the Rocky Mountains. "A basic postulate of American politics today," says the political demographer Mark Gersh, a Democratic strategist, "is that the swing vote is much, much smaller than it used to be." Strategists in both parties have narrowed their focus to no more than 10 percent of the electorate (some have narrowed it even further), and both parties plan to seriously contest only about fifteen states in November. This shrunken playing field, along with hardening lines in the electorate, all but guarantees a close race. That in turn limits the strategic possibilities for both parties to the point where it is possible to predict in considerable detail what the next campaign will look like—even without knowing the identity of the Democratic nominee.

Joshua Green is a senior editor of The Atlantic *and a contributing editor of* The Washington Monthly.

There is a widespread misperception that the course of a presidential campaign flows directly from the candidate's persona. Naturally, a Howard Dean campaign would differ in style and atmospherics from one featuring Wesley Clark or John Kerry or Richard Gephardt. But with so little room to maneuver, the Democratic formula for victory will depend less than ever on the identity of the nominee. Instead it will be dictated by geographic and demographic necessity—how best to cobble together the necessary 270 electoral votes. The candidate must carry a sufficient number of swing states, and success in each one will depend on highly specific combinations of constituencies and issues—many of which can already be identified. In other words, just as the genetic blueprint for human beings and chimpanzees is 95 percent identical, the campaign blueprint for the Democratic candidates will be nearly the same, regardless of which becomes the party's nominee.

The unprecedented closeness of the 2000 presidential election has had dramatic effects on the political world, from the news media's hesitancy to call election results to the parties' renewed emphasis on voter turnout to the newfound superstition among speechwriters that they must prepare *three* versions of a candidate's election-night remarks: the dignified victory speech, the gracious concession, and a third in case the election is too close to call. To political demographers, who digest ungodly amounts of data in an effort to understand and predict the behavior of the American

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electorate, the 2000 contest provided a sort of Rosetta stone: a demographic snapshot of a nation in perfect balance, which has become the starting point for strategy in 2004.

All told, twelve states in the previous presidential election were decided by fewer than five percentage points. Along with two or three other states where demographic changes portend a similar closeness, they make up the battleground this year. The most significant states are scattered across the Pacific Northwest (Oregon, Washington), the Southwest (Arizona, Nevada, New Mexico), and the Rust Belt (Ohio, Pennsylvania, West Virginia), with outliers on the East Coast (Florida and New Hampshire) and others along a lengthy stretch of the Mississippi River, from Minnesota and Wisconsin down to Arkansas and Missouri. The next Democratic campaign will closely follow this map.

THE NORTHWEST. In numerical terms the most striking aspect of the 2000 election remains the number of votes Al Gore lost to Ralph Nader. "Democrats created an opening for Nader in 2000 by not taking the Green Party seriously enough until it was too late," says Doug Sosnik, a White House political director under Bill Clinton. To head off a similar catastrophe the Democratic nominee will probably begin his campaign with an early pilgrimage to the Pacific Northwest, where Green Party support is strongest, to quell a potential challenge. Such a move would not only strengthen the candidate's standing in Oregon and Washington, two states Gore won narrowly, but also provide a platform for talking about the environment—one of the few "wedge issues" available to Democrats, and an issue pollsters believe is the primary motivator for six percent of voters.

THE SOUTH. The other great political truth revealed in 2000—and reinforced in 2002—is the Republicans' consolidation of the South. The long-standing axiom that the Democrats must carry southern states to win the presidency still holds sway among many political consultants, and at least partially accounts for the premium placed on southern candidates such as Wesley Clark and John Edwards. But Democratic strategists are increasingly aware that that goal

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has become nearly unattainable. With the exception of Florida, the South has trended away from the party. Bill Clinton's success in the 1990s was not indicative of a southern Democratic resurgence—rather, it masked this erosion. Georgia, which Clinton carried in 1992, went Republican in 1996. Arkansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, and Tennessee, which Clinton carried in both his elections, all followed suit in 2000. Thomas F. Schaller, a professor of political science at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, warns, "Pursuing a southern strategy in 2004, instead of looking ahead to other areas, could relegate the party to minority status for years to come." Indeed, the futility of a southern strategy is tacitly acknowledged in the list of swing states that Democratic groups are planning to contest this year. Of the seventeen states targeted by America Coming Together, a coalition of liberal interest groups aimed at mobilizing Democratic voters, only Florida and Arkansas are in the South.

THE SOUTHWEST. The Democrats' new area of opportunity is a swath of formerly Republican territory where an influx of Latinos and transplanted white Democrats is changing the demographic profile. Gore's lone win in this region was New Mexico, where his margin of victory was even narrower than his margin of defeat in Florida. But newly elected Democratic governors in Arizona and New Mexico and booming Hispanic populations there (25 percent and 42 percent, respectively) should persuade this year's nominee to spend considerable time and effort in the region. Nevada, too, has become a case study for Democratic optimism: although Bush carried the state in 2000, the Latino population surged by 15 percent in just the next two years; Clark County, which leans Democratic, is among the nation's fastest-growing counties; and Las Vegas, in that county, is rapidly unionizing. Furthermore, Nevada presents an enticing opportunity to raise the issue of Yucca Mountain, where President Bush recently decided to dump nuclear waste after vowing during his campaign not to do so.

FLORIDA. Latinos, who have historically been identified with the Democratic Party, now represent an important swing vote. As it became clear in the closing weeks of the 2000 campaign that several battleground states would go down to the wire, the Republicans spent an unprecedented amount of money on Spanish-language television advertising; overall, they ended up spending more than twice as much as the Democrats. According to Adam J. Segal, the director of the Hispanic Voter Project, at Johns Hopkins University, the Bush campaign poured money into Florida media markets in particular, stoking Hispanic anger over the Clinton Administration's handling of the Elián González affair—and ultimately helping to deprive Gore of the state and the election. (In contrast, Gore outspent Bush nearly three to one in New Mexico, and won.) And with some strategists believing that the 2004 election, too, could hinge on Florida—and that Florida could hinge on the heavily Hispanic I-4 corridor between Tampa and Orlando—the Democrats are sure to avoid making the same mistake again.

THE UPPER MIDWEST. The culturally cautious Rust Belt states that were a key to Bush's win have been particularly hard hit by the net loss of three million jobs since Bush took office, 2.4 million of them in the manufacturing sector. As the Democratic contenders delight in pointing out, Bush stands to become the first President since Herbert Hoover to see the country lose more jobs than it gained on his watch. Even if the economy improves, a critical component of the Democrats' regional rhetoric will be reminding voters exactly how many manufacturing jobs have been lost in states such as Michigan (127,000), Pennsylvania (132,500), and Ohio (151,800).

THE MISSISSIPPI BASIN. Finally, for all the ribbing it drew, Gore's four-day riverboat tour along the Mississippi after the Democratic convention is likely to be repeated in some fashion by the next Democratic nominee. Though Bush's campaign manager, Karl Rove, dismissed it at the time as a corny gimmick, he later changed his mind. By floating down the river Gore hit small, difficult-to-reach media markets in such key midwestern swing states as Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, Iowa, and Missouri. (He won all but Missouri.) When Rove later sought to target some of these same areas, he discovered that no airport nearby was large enough to land the Boeing 757 that served as Bush's campaign plane. "We never got Bush there," Rove lamented afterward, and he laid the blame for Gore's narrow win in Iowa on that fact.

Two decades ago as much as a third of the voting public was deemed to be in play. Strategists in both parties have narrowed their focus to no more than 10 percent of the electorate.

If the 2000 election supplied the road map for the next campaign, the 2002 midterm elections gave both parties an urgent mandate to reach swing voters. Democratic campaigns mostly outperformed their Republican counterparts in the elections of 1996, 1998, and 2000. (Gore did, after all, win more votes than any U.S. President except Reagan.) This was thanks largely to Election Day voter-turnout efforts, which got Democrats to the polls and often proved decisive. But in 2002 the Republicans shocked the Democrats by besting them on this front, nullifying an important edge. This has set off a pitched battle to capture the narrowing

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sliver of what pollsters call "persuadables"—the undecided voters who will make the difference in any close election.

In fact, it has sparked a kind of demographic arms race. For the first time, both parties are embracing sophisticated and costly demographic technology that until recently was the province of consumer market-research companies. The Democratic National Committee has acquired a database of 158 million voters it has dubbed the "DataMart." Appended to every name are as many as 306 "lifestyle variables" gleaned from voter files, consumer databases, and other sources. From these, candidates can find out a citizen's voting record, number of children, kind of car, favorite television shows and magazines, and even number of pets. Not to be outdone, the Republican National Committee has its own Orwellian construct, called the "Voter Vault," which contains records on 165 million people.

By drawing samples from the DataMart, the thinking goes, Democratic pollsters and interest groups can create intricate predictive models of where the most sought-after voters will be found. "In a crowded marketplace," the pollster Geoff Garin explains, "it's about being able to know the architecture of the people most likely to be supportive of you and seeking them out."

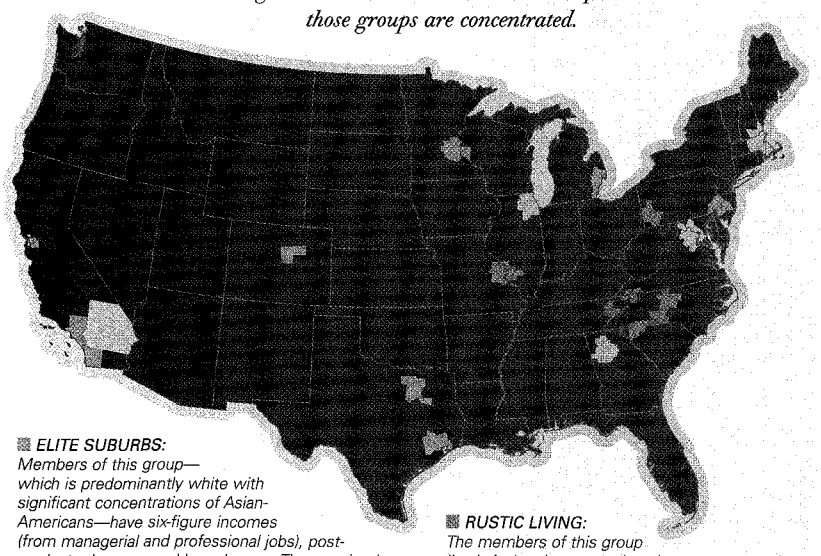
It is no longer enough to posit that a broad notional category such as "soccer moms" will decide an election. Advances in computer and database technology now offer infinitely more detail, promising campaign staffs the capacity to learn not only which issues matter most to a *particular* soccer mom but also her home address, the phrasing likeliest to persuade her, and when, how, and by whom she might prefer to be approached. Karen White, the political director for the pro-choice women's group Emily's List, which is working with DataMart information, says, "In the past we've always tried to bring voters to us on our issues. This time we're getting so much insight into their personal lives that we can actually bring what they need to hear to them, on their terms."

The New Democrat Network, a centrist political organization, was among the first in this election cycle to use polling to sketch out a profile of the latest generation of swing voters. Data shared with each of the Democratic candidates (and provided to *The Atlantic*) describes them as mainly white and also younger, less likely to vote, and more likely than self-identified Democrats or Republicans to characterize themselves as "workaholics." They are most heavily concentrated in suburbs and small cities, and though they disapprove of many Bush Administration policies, they tend to be more religious and to admire military service more than most Democrats do. "On many issues their attitudes correspond strongly with the Democratic Party even though demographically they are closer to Republican voters," says Peter Brodnitz, of the firm Penn, Schoen and Berland, which conducted the poll. The New Democrat Network identified civil liberties and the environment as the two issues on which independents and Republicans most strongly disagree—and, indeed, many of the Democratic candidates have sounded precisely these themes. (Buried in the report's "tactical recommendations" is information that both sides in the next campaign may find useful: independents listen to a disproportionate amount of country radio, and they watch *SportsCenter* more often than other Americans—a taste, the poll reveals, that corresponds more closely with Democrats' than Republicans'.)

Other organizations, including Emily's List, have conducted broader studies to sort independents into smaller "lifestyle clusters," the better to target them in the fall. Emily's List has identified four basic groups: disengaged "Bystanders," who when motivated to vote lean Democratic; "Senior Health Care" voters, whose gender (predominantly female) suggests an inclination to support Democrats; "Education First" voters, 64 percent female and 66 percent pro-choice but currently more supportive of Bush and the Iraq War than the typical Democrat; and the "Young Economically Pressured," many of whom work more than forty hours a week and may care for

WHERE THE SWING VOTERS LIVE

Using categories created by Claritas, a market-research company, the polling firm Penn, Schoen and Berland has identified the three "social groups" that will make up the swing vote in the 2004 election. This map shows where those groups are concentrated.



ELITE SUBURBS: Members of this group—which is predominantly white with significant concentrations of Asian-Americans—have six-figure incomes (from managerial and professional jobs), post-graduate degrees, and large homes. They tend to buy expensive clothes and luxury cars, and to travel abroad.

SECOND-CITY SOCIETY: These are the wealthiest families who have settled in metropolitan areas outside urban cores. Most are married couples with children; they have college degrees and executive jobs, and they spend heavily on digital and wireless technology, casual-dining restaurants, upscale retail goods, and luxury cars.

RUSTIC LIVING: The members of this group live in isolated towns and rural villages. They have modest incomes, low levels of education, and blue-collar jobs. The young singles and senior citizens who make up this group spend their leisure time hunting and fishing, attending social activities at local churches and veterans' clubs, listening to country music, and watching auto races.

MORE THAN ONE GROUP

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an elderly parent. Though this last group tends to support the Democratic position on funding public schools and other issues, its members live predominantly in small towns or rural areas and are culturally conservative.

The challenge for the next Democratic candidate will be reaching all these independents, many of whom live in small cities and suburbs that are gradually abandoning the Democratic Party. The suburban vote, which Bush won narrowly in 2000, continues to grow. Suburban women already tend to vote Democratic, so the nominee must make a special effort to appeal to men, whose vote fluctuates more than women's in presidential elections and who have lately deserted the party in large numbers: men now prefer Republicans over Democrats by 19 percentage points. Efforts to do this are under way on gun control and other issues. Gore was widely thought to have lost blue-collar swing voters in West Virginia and Ohio because of his position on guns and—pollsters argue—how he spoke about it: gun owners believed that Gore would take away their weapons, and voted accordingly. But pollsters discovered that if the discussion had simply been reframed to acknowledge the Second Amendment right to bear arms (as in the phrase "with rights come responsibilities"), 20 percent of gun owners—seven percent of the electorate—would have been inclined to vote Democratic. It's probably no accident that none of the leading Democratic candidates have echoed Gore.

One early lesson that ought to figure in the Democratic campaign is the importance of values, which have replaced income as the best indicator of voting behavior. In the past income corresponded strongly to party preference: voters supported the Democratic Party when they were poor and grew increasingly Republican as they moved up the income scale. That's no longer true. The exodus of white working-class voters from the Democratic Party has been well documented ever since the Republican revolution of 1994. A similar migration away from the Republican Party by affluent suburbanites alienated by the party's social conservatism has received less notice. Just as white working-class voters swung Georgia and other once Democratic states to the Republican Party, affluent suburbanites turned formerly Republican states such as Illinois and New Jersey into Democratic strongholds. The Democratic nominee will have to hold on to these upscale voters while winning back working-class voters.

"We're a party that prefers to talk about issues, not values," says Bruce Reed, who was Bill Clinton's domestic-policy chief. "Clinton demonstrated that if we want to expand our reach, we have to talk in terms of values." Clinton successfully rewrote the language of values to fit his own policies—family and medical leave, the V-chip, school uniforms—rather than those of the social conservatives who popularized it. In fact, both Clinton and Bush set an example for the next Democratic nominee by rising above party stereotype to attract independents: Clinton by endorsing fiscal conservatism, fighting crime, and opposing welfare dependency; Bush by using enough compassionate rhetoric to persuade independents that he wasn't another meanspirited Republican like Newt Gingrich.

It is a rare point of agreement among Democrats that the party owes its win in the 2000 popular vote to an unprecedented mobilization of minority and union voters. Any serious discussion of another close election must be premised on a similar performance. The strong Republican turnout efforts in the 2002 and 2003 elections have only increased the pressure on the next Democratic campaign to keep pace.

One way Democrats hope to do so is by improving their methods of reaching voters. Party bosses once relied on local precinct captains to impart a measure of personalization to even the largest campaigns. In the 1970s and 1980s, however, television developed into a more efficient medium; direct human contact waned, eventually giving rise to the maddening wall-to-wall carpet-bombing of TV attack ads that are the hallmark of modern campaigns. Today, in light of the proven benefits of voter-turnout efforts, strategists in both parties are hoping to combine demographic information with political research in order to repersonalize campaigns and lure back dropout voters who are disillusioned with politics. Emily's List has even asked voters in certain elections to keep a diary of every political contact they received, recording each instance in which a television ad, phone call, or direct-mail brochure caught their attention.

In the pursuit of the narrowing sliver of "persuadables," both parties are embracing sophisticated, costly demographic technology that until recently was the province of consumer market-research companies.

Perhaps most striking about the Democratic effort to shape the next campaign is its urgency. The McCain-Feingold campaign-finance-reform laws have had the effect of directing much of the available campaign money away from the Democratic National Committee and toward a broad range of liberal interest groups. Within these groups there is a palpable sense of desperation about the party's predicament and a corresponding willingness to experiment that the hidebound DNC rarely displayed. There is also the stinging example of Karl Rove, who brilliantly understood that rigorously pursuing a patchwork of distinct constituencies could add up to an unlikely electoral victory. But above all there is the pervasive fear that the next Democratic candidate will once again be a hairsbreadth from victory—and once again manage to lose.

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I WAS KIM JONG IL'S COOK

True stories from the Dear Leader's onetime chef

BY KENJI FUJIMOTO

Translated from the Japanese by Makiko Kitamura

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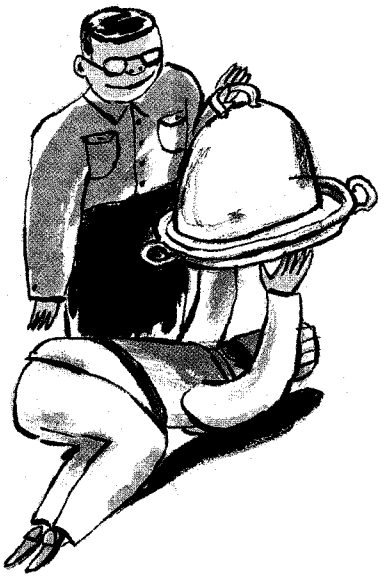
The author, who writes under a pseudonym, is a Japanese sushi chef. In 1982, at the invitation of a Japanese–North Korean trading company, he started working in a sushi restaurant in Pyongyang. In 1988 he agreed to serve as Kim Jong Il's personal chef—a job he held until 2001. In April of that year, having realized the extent of the paranoid and oppressive surveillance he was under, he escaped to Japan. In 2003, in Japanese, he published Kim Jong Il's Chef *(Fuso Publishing, Inc.), from which these excerpts are drawn.*



Well known in Japan from TV and tabloid coverage, Kim Jong Il's "Entourage of Delight" is just that —a group of entertainers devoted to providing Kim Jong Il with delight and gaiety.

The women of this entourage were frequently summoned to the "Number 8 Banquet Hall" in Pyongyang to perform elegant dances. The stage of this hall was equipped with an elaborate lighting system that included footlights on the sides and even a disco mirror ball hanging from the middle of the ceiling with strobe lights. The floor was also decked out with lights that flashed from below, and floor-to-ceiling speakers pounded out music.

During a banquet one night a group of five dancers in the entertainment entourage were performing a disco dance. Suddenly Kim Jong Il ordered, "Take off your clothes!" The girls took off their clothes, but then Kim told them to take it all off. They seemed surprised and could not hide their bewilderment, but they could not object to their Dear Leader's orders. In awkward embarrassment they stripped down and continued their performance in the nude.

After a while he turned to his cabinet staff members and instructed them, "You guys dance with them too." And soon enough I, too, was ordered to dance. However, he cautioned us, "You'll dance, but you won't touch. If you touch, you're thieves." In other words, I think Kim Jong Il felt these girls were like his own daughters.

.....

Kim Jong Il has an exceptionally discriminating palate. There is an episode I remember well that demonstrates this. I was preparing sushi in the Number 8 Banquet Hall. All of a sudden Kim Jong Il said, "Fujimoto, today's sushi tastes a little different."

He had had a lot to drink that evening before the meal, and I suggested that maybe that was the reason.

He replied, "Maybe ..." He seemed doubtful, but didn't pursue it any further.

However, when I returned to the kitchen, I checked the seasoning used that day and found that the sugar was ten grams less than usual! Kim Jong Il was the only one who had noticed. Even I was astonished at this.

With respect to rice, before cooking it a waiter and a kitchen staff member would inspect it grain by grain. Chipped and defective grains were extracted; only those with perfect form were presented.

.....

Kim Jong Il is an avid equestrian, and has even appeared in a TV movie atop a snow-white horse. (All horses belonging to the Kim family are white.) I often accompanied him on long rides. A group of guides would lead the pack, followed by Kim Jong Il, his wife Ko Young Hee, the children, and me.

One day in 1992, as I was riding behind Kim Jong Il at a right-turning path, I noticed that his horse was standing by itself. Kim had fallen off the horse. It had apparently slipped on a bed of pebbles laid over some asphalt being repaired. Kim Jong Il had hit his head and shoulder quite hard and had fallen unconscious. A doctor was called immediately.

I'm not sure when he regained consciousness, but the next day we all returned to Pyongyang by his private train.

From that day, every evening at 10:00 P.M. for the next month, five or six of his administrative staff members and I would be injected with the same painkiller that Kim Jong Il was taking. He was afraid he would become addicted to it, and didn't want to be the only one.

.....

To procure various foods and ingredients I made many trips abroad. Each time Kim Jong Il ordered me to go buy

ERIC HANSEN

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this or that, flight arrangements would be made and I would go off.

Fish was the most sought-after item from Japan. High-quality tuna and squid, one of Madame Ko's favorite foods, were often requested. Once I bought 1,200 kilos in total; the air-transport fees alone were exorbitant.

The reason the shipment weighed so much was that I had bought a very large Indian tuna whole. I also bought an electric saw to use to fillet the fish. I had once spent six months filleting tuna at Tokyo's Tsukiji fish market, and I wanted to show Kim Jong Il and his family my technique.

In any event, here are the countries I visited and the foods I frequently bought there:

- Urumqi (in northwestern China) for fruit, mainly hamigua melons and grapes
- Thailand for fruit, mostly durians, papayas, and mangoes
- Malaysia for fruit, mostly durians, papayas, and mangoes
- Czechoslovakia for draft beer
- Denmark for pork
- Iran for caviar
- Uzbekistan for caviar
- Japan for seafood

.....

As I was riding a Jet Ski on a lake near the Chinese border, Kim Jong Il came up next to me and said, "Fujimoto, let's race. But I want you to take it seriously."

He gave the signal to start, and I rammed the accelerator as hard as I could. Halfway through I looked at him and realized that I was leading by about half a boat length. For a moment I thought I was making a mistake, but I remembered that he had said he wanted me to take the race seriously, so I crossed the finish line first.

Kim Jong Il said begrudgingly, "You win, Fujimoto."

At that moment I thought maybe it hadn't been such a good idea to win, and I regretted it a bit. But he had said it was a serious race, so I decided I wasn't wrong in winning. Until then nobody else had ever won a contest against Kim Jong Il.

A month later he once again challenged me to a race. However, this time at the starting line I was surprised to see that he had traded his old Jet Ski for a much larger one. With a different engine capacity there was no way I could win.

At this time several areas in North Korea were suffering from floods and food shortages. Whether he was aware of this or not, Kim Jong Il certainly seemed to be enjoying his Jet Ski races.

.....

One day during a meal Kim Jong Il suddenly said, "Fujimoto, I've heard that in Japan there is a rice cake filled with mugwort. I want you to go and buy it tomorrow!"

In addition he told me to buy every brand of Japanese cigarette and to spend no more than three days on the trip.

I departed promptly, and when I reached the Beijing airport, I placed a call to the Mitsukoshi department store in Tokyo's Ginza district to reserve 100 regular red-bean-filled rice cakes and 100 mugwort-filled rice cakes. The next morning I retrieved the cakes and immediately marched back to Beijing. Each cake cost only about 100 yen, but I calculated that with air and hotel expenses each one cost a whopping 1,500 yen [about $14].

Thus I made my whirlwind round trip between Pyongyang and Tokyo to make a rush hand delivery of rice cakes and cigarettes to Kim Jong Il.

When I lined up the Japanese cigarettes on the baccarat table, Kim Jong Il smoked only the menthol kinds. At the time, he had been smoking a British brand called Rothmans Royals, but he said he had wanted to try Japanese menthols as well. After that he smoked Cartier menthols, but from 1998 to 1999 he quit smoking altogether.

As for the rice cakes, he awaited the approval of the inspection staff before tasting them. Once he did, he was very satisfied and remarked, "Japanese rice cakes are really delicious. Why can't our cooks make them this way? The aroma of the mugwort is also very nice."

.....

From 1989 through 1991 I was invited often to Kim Jong Il's official residence. There he kept a very large liquor cellar. Famous liquor brands from around the world were lined up, maybe about 10,000 bottles in all.

At the time, Kim Jong Il drank Johnnie Walker Swing for whiskey and Hennessy XO for cognac.

The liquor cellar also had a karaoke set, a piano, and a round table that could seat fifteen or sixteen people. There, I remember, we often sang together the Japanese song "The Bride in Seto."

.....

One day in March of 2001 I was having a drink on my balcony, looking at the ocean. I was thinking, *Oh, at the other end of this ocean is Japan; I wonder when I'll be able to go back next.* But I told myself that I just had to be patient.

And then, at that moment, I remembered that my sister had dubbed several dozen of her more interesting videos of Japanese TV shows for me. Among them was a tape of a cooking program called *The "Which Dish?" Show.* I recalled that an exceedingly tasty-looking sea-urchin dish was featured on the show, and thought that I should show it to Kim Jong Il. I knew that he was very fond of sea urchin, and that once he saw the show, he would want to try the dish. That would be my chance. I would just have to suggest, "Shall I go to Hokkaido to buy sea urchins for you?"

I took the videotape to Kim Jong Il. Lo and behold, when he saw the sea-urchin dish, he exclaimed, "Wow, that looks really good!" Without missing a beat I made my pitch: "I will go to Rishiri Island, in Hokkaido, and buy some sea urchin. And I will reproduce the dish you just saw on this show."

Kim Jong Il replied, "That's a great idea. Go for it!"

Fujimoto never returned to North Korea. He is reported to be living in hiding but has appeared repeatedly on Japanese television, with his face obscured, as a Kim Jong Il expert.

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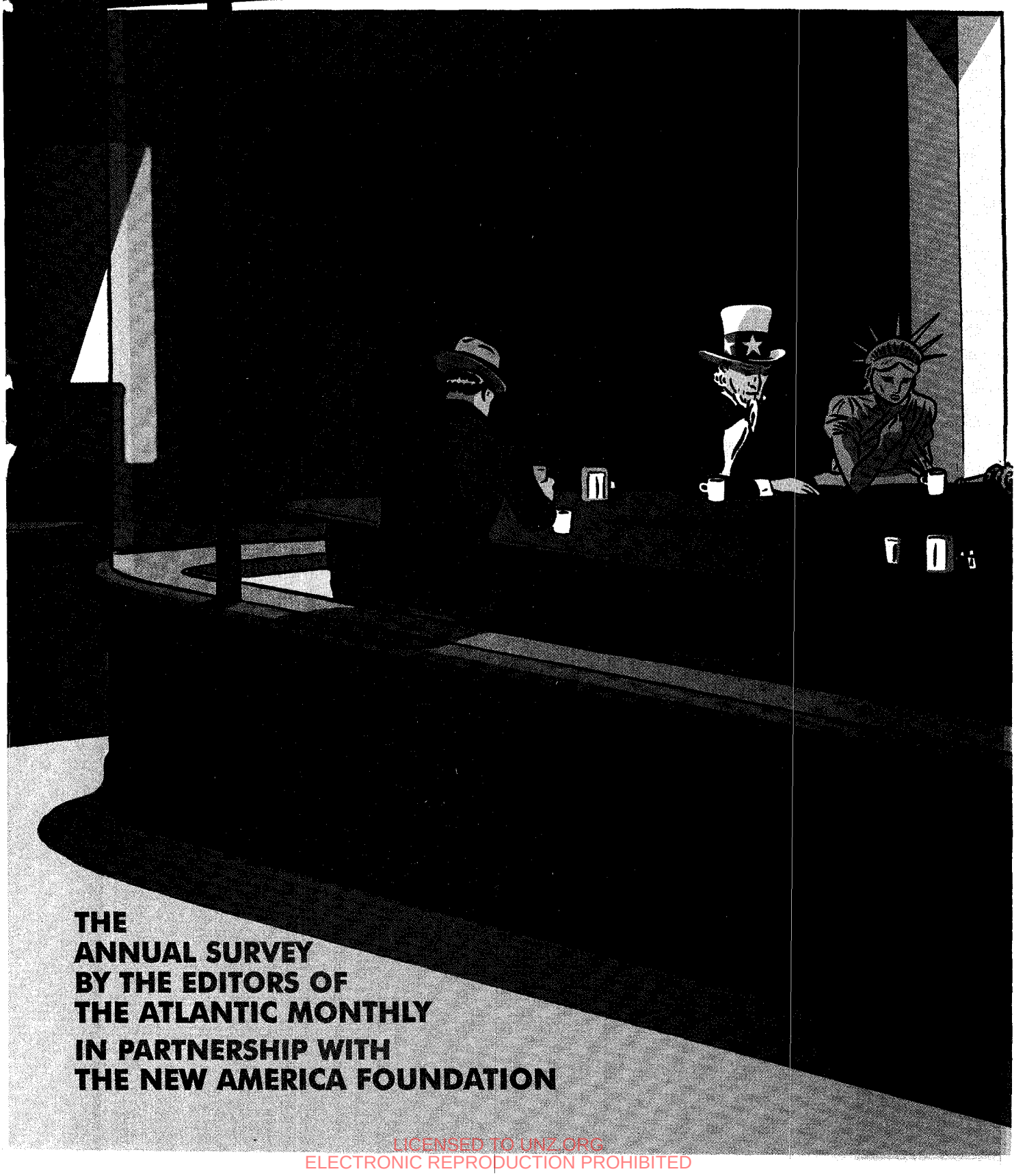
THE ATLANTIC MONTHLY

STATE OF THE UNION



THE ANNUAL SURVEY BY THE EDITORS OF THE ATLANTIC MONTHLY IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE NEW AMERICA FOUNDATION

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STATE OF THE UNION

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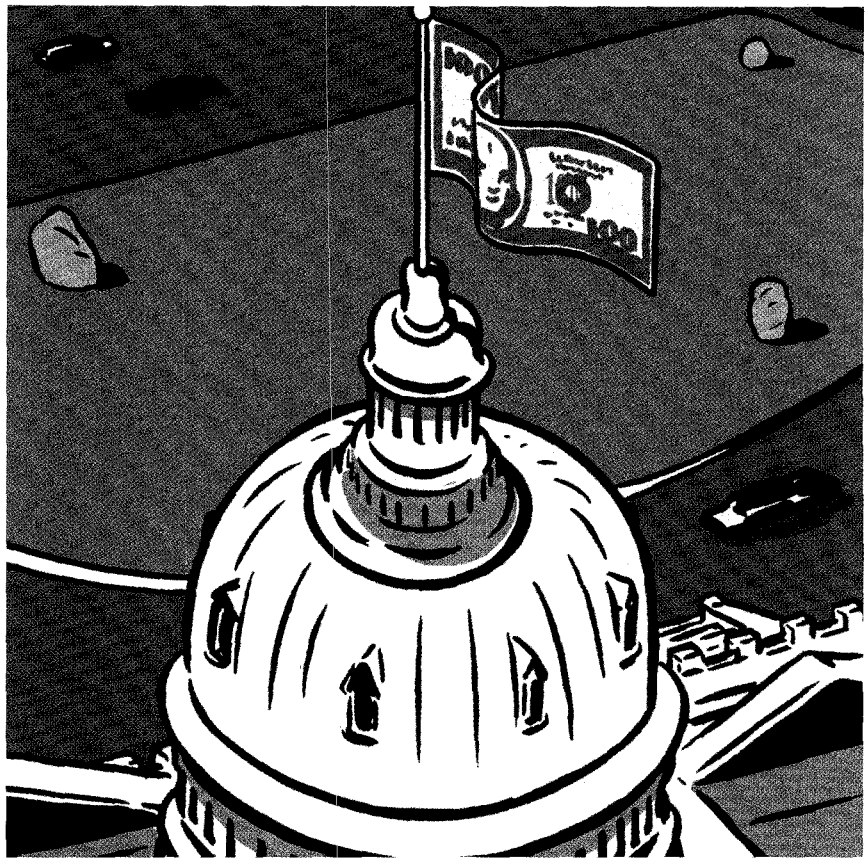
Illustrations by Jason Schneider

[Part I: *The Economy*]

America's Fortunes

In terms of personal prosperity most people are doing better than they think. But prospects for the unemployed are only getting worse. And two big storm clouds loom over everything



At any given moment the state of any nation—and especially the state of any stable industrial democracy, where a measure of political calm and social order can generally be taken for granted—is determined largely by the state of its economy. Wars, relative military strength, terrorist attacks, natural disasters, demographic changes, social trends, election outcomes, even the results of international sporting competitions, can all contribute significantly to a country's perception of its own well-being. At times, certainly, one or more of these factors can outweigh the economy in affecting the collective sense of how the country is faring. But as any presidential candidate will tell you, for the average American citizen the most basic measure of national well-being amounts one way or another to economics. Is my income higher or lower than it was last year? Is my job more or less secure? Across the spectrum of class or income well-being is measured to a considerable degree by the question "Can I afford ... ?" Can I afford to put the kids through college? Buy a house? Put my mother in a nursing home? Pay for day care? Put food on the table? Buy a vacation home?

But as important as the economy is in determining the state of the union, it is also a problematic measure, because the "real" state of the economy does not match our collective perception of it. That is, although one could in theory deduce America's exact sense of its economic well-being at any given moment by extrapolating from each citizen's income and expenses a kind of aggregate national answer to the question "Can I afford to ... ?," that would provide only an indirect and backward-looking measure of the economy's real strength. The

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true condition of the economy is best seen not as a snapshot of individuals' circumstances but as the movement of deeper forces through time; economists look back for measures of what has already happened, and then use various logical assumptions to project what will happen in the future.

Obviously, the state of the economy is a somewhat relative thing; how we judge it depends greatly on what we use as a basis for comparison. Compared with 2001, for instance, last year was in some respects a good one for the economy. Compared with 1999, however, it was in many ways disappointing. And in fact the economy of 2003 was by several measures comparable to the economy of 1997. Does this mean the economy has regressed? Or that it has returned to its natural level after a period of aberration? And what, if anything, can these historical comparisons tell us about the coming years?

Although the essays in "State of the Union" cover a wide variety of topics—from the long-term federal budget deficit to the changing nature of the middle class, from the health-care-cost conundrum to the rising level of anger in American society—all these topics are ultimately bound up with (either as influences on or as derivatives of) the state of the economy. In this opening essay we aim to establish the broader context that underlies all these issues, and to provide a balanced view of the U.S. economy—not just of how it's doing today, or this year, but of the deeper structural forces that will determine our prosperity over the long term.

In retrospect, the late 1990s appear to have been a golden age produced in part by the serendipitous confluence of unsustainable factors such as the stock-market boom, the post–Cold War "peace dividend," and a consumer borrowing binge of historic proportions. (Today, three years after the stock-market bubble burst, we are still suffering something of a hangover from the excesses of that giddy era.) But as accidental as that brief golden age may in some ways have been, and as irrational as the exuberance that propelled it was, the underlying forces at work in the late 1990s were real, and they began to reshape the economy in fundamental ways. We can now begin to see the enduring effect of those forces.

In the short term—let's say the next couple of years—the majority of Americans can expect to keep improving their economic lot; however, a significant minority—mainly the newly jobless in certain old-line industries—will watch their already dim prospects darken even further. And over the longer term—let's say ten years or more—a much broader swath of the American population will have reason to be very concerned about the economic future.

THE REVERSE-LOTTERY ECONOMY

Recent media coverage of the economy has focused on the troubled state of the job market. We are told that proportionally fewer adults are working today than at any time in the past ten years; that not since the Great Depression have we failed to produce an increase in the number of jobs for such a long period of time; and that median household incomes have fallen.

All this is true. Yet the overall picture that emerges from these facts is largely false. The "jobless recovery" has hardly been jobless: the unemployment rate—which stood at 5.9 percent in November—is lower than the average for the past thirty years, and is right at the threshold that most economists as recently as the mid-1990s believed was the lowest it could go without triggering inflation. Although it is true that some jobless people have given up looking

AMERICAN MILESTONES, 2003

Foreign-born residents	33.5 million	5% increase since 2001
Hispanic residents	38.8 million	Passed African-Americans to become largest U.S. minority in 2002
GDP	$11 trillion	50% increase over 1995
Proportion of unemployed workers looking for a job for 27 weeks or more	23%	Highest proportion in 20 years
Big-three automakers' market share	58%	Record low; and Toyota's market share passed Chrysler's in August
Fed funds rate	1.01% (October 2003)	Lowest since 1954
30-year mortgage rate	5.21% (June 2003)	Lowest in at least 40 years
Federal budget	$2.157 trillion	7% increase over 2002
Federal budget deficit	$374 billion	In real terms, the largest in history; as percentage of GDP (3.5), smaller than Reagan-era deficits
Defense spending	$389 billion	16% increase over 2002
Millionaire households	3.8 million	Record high; 14% increase over 2002
CEO-to-worker pay ratio	400:1	All-time high
Prison population	2,166,260	All-time high; 1 in 143 adults
Violent-crime rate	22.8 victims per 1,000 people	Record low
Property-crime rate	159 incidents per 1,000 households	Record low
Car-to-driver ratio per household	1.9 to 1.8	First time number of cars per household is greater than number of drivers per household
Ratio of divorces to marriages	3.9 to 7.7	Highest rate in U.S. history
Obese Americans	1 in 5	Twice as many as in 1986

SOURCES: U.S. CENSUS BUREAU; BUREAU OF ECONOMIC ANALYSIS; BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS; WWW.EDMUNDS.COM; FEDERAL RESERVE BOARD; FREDDIE MAC; CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE; NPO WORLDGROUP; *THE ECONOMIST*, OCTOBER 11, 2003; BUREAU OF JUSTICE STATISTICS; BUREAU OF TRANSPORTATION STATISTICS; NATIONAL CENTER FOR HEALTH STATISTICS (CDC); RAND CORPORATION

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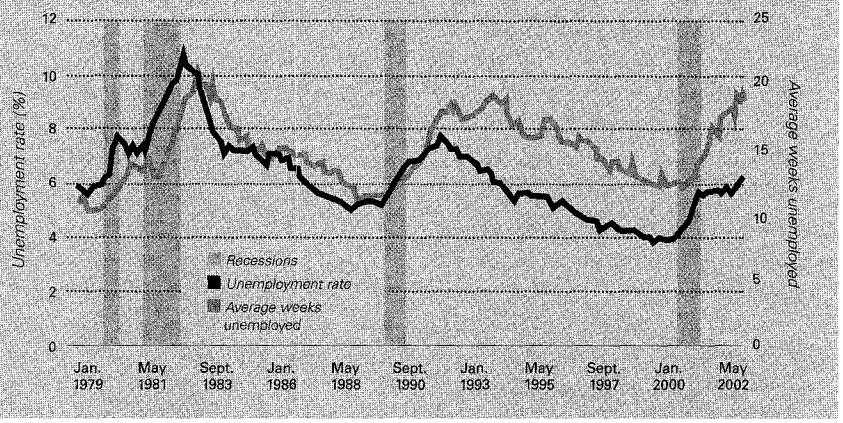
for work, and are therefore no longer even counted in official unemployment statistics, about half these people are teenagers, many of whom have forsaken the part-time-job market in order to focus on schoolwork—hardly the stuff of a national crisis. In fact only 5.4 percent of those who have left the work force fit the definition of "discouraged workers"—people who have given up looking for work principally because they don't believe they can find it.

Those workers who have kept their jobs have for the most part prospered, despite the slackening of the job market. Real hourly-wage growth has continued through the recession and the recovery, albeit at a slower pace than in the late 1990s. And wage growth has been broadly distributed, meaning that most workers, including most of the middle class, have benefited. In fact, there is a wide gap between how most people feel the economy in general is faring (poorly) and how they feel they themselves are doing (quite well). A poll conducted by the Gallup Organization in August found that 75 percent of respondents rated the financial well-being of "average Americans" as "poor" or "only fair," and that 89 percent considered the employment situation specifically to be either "poor" or "only fair." (Nearly 50 percent rated it as downright "poor.") Yet when asked about their personal experiences, only 19 percent of those currently working said they were worried about being laid off, and even fewer worried about having their hours or wages reduced—the same percentage that feared these things in 1997, when the economy was booming. Another recent poll, by the Pew Research Center, found that only 35 percent of Americans disagreed with the statement "I'm pretty well satisfied with the way things are going for me financially." The percentage of Americans disagreeing with that statement has been lower only three times out of twelve since Pew first began asking about it, in 1987. Similarly, the percentage of respondents agreeing with the statement "I often don't have enough money to make ends meet" has been lower only twice—in 2002 and in 1999.

None of this is to deny that the job market is weaker today than it was in 1999—and policymakers should be taking steps to strengthen it. But for most Americans things are still going pretty well.

POUNDING THE PAVEMENT LONGER

Although the unemployment rate has remained fairly low over the past decade, the jobless are staying jobless for longer than they used to



The real problem is neither flagging income for the unemployed nor the sheer number of workers laid off but, rather, the economic prospects of those workers who do lose their jobs. In June the average duration of unemployment hit 20.1 weeks—the highest it's been since January of 1984. And 43 percent of workers who signed up for unemployment benefits in 2002 exhausted them. This may have been an unusually mild recession for most Americans, but it's been unusually harsh for those who have lost jobs.

The problems facing recently laid-off workers—those who are still unemployed and also those who have found new jobs at reduced pay—are not likely to disappear as the economy picks up; these problems lie deeper than the business cycle. Over the past ten years, through boom and bust, unanticipated job loss has become a more wrenching experience for many workers. In earlier decades the unemployment rate and the average number of weeks unemployed tended to move in tandem: out-of-work people had a harder time finding jobs during recessions and an easier time during recoveries. But by the early 1990s [see chart above] many unemployed workers had trouble finding new work even in a strong job market. In 1997, with the unemployment rate down to 4.7 percent, the average duration of unemployment stood at about sixteen weeks—higher than it had been in all but three years during the 1980s, when unemployment was much higher.

When unemployed workers did find new jobs during the 1980s and 1990s, they had to settle for wages that were on average 14 percent lower than those in their previous jobs. A 14 percent pay cut is financially painful enough—but it's even more painful when it occurs amid a widespread expectation of steadily rising income. And since the mid-1990s the situation has been getting worse. In fact, a 2003 analysis by Henry Farber, an economist at Princeton University, reveals that when workers who lost their jobs finally found new ones, the gap between their new wages and the wages they would have earned (had they been able to stay in their old jobs) was nearly triple what it would have been almost a decade ago. The gap is greatest for highly educated workers. According to Farber's analysis of the most recent Displaced Workers Survey from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, covering 1999 through 2001, shows that workers with more than sixteen years of education saw an average reduction in income of roughly 23 percent upon finding new jobs; in the mid-1990s the reduction averaged only 12 percent.

The worsening plight of the unemployed is closely related to changes in American business practice. As productivity has increased and global competition has intensified, firms have

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continually restructured their operations—not just by laying off workers in response to temporary downturns in demand but by eliminating positions, even whole classes of positions, altogether. The share of jobs lost owing to the abolition of positions rather than to slack work, plant closings, or other reasons has doubled since the early 1980s. Erica Groshen and Simon Potter, economists at the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, argue that the main reason higher unemployment has lingered so long into the current recovery is that most lost jobs have been restructured out of existence. Workers whose jobs have been eliminated outright often cannot find anything directly comparable, either because the work they do has become obsolete or because their skills are company- or industry-specific, and not easily transferable elsewhere. These displacements are still not exceedingly common, but they are quite damaging to individuals when they occur.

In short, we have entered what might be called a "reverse-lottery economy." The broad majority of American workers continue to do well; yet in any given year—even in boom times—a few workers hit the negative jackpot and must accept lengthy or even permanent reductions in living standards. Increasingly, these unfortunates hail from a variety of educational backgrounds and occupations. (One recent study found that U.S. financial-service firms are planning to move more than 500,000 jobs—or eight percent of the total work force in that sector—offshore within the next five years. These relocations will include higher-status, higher-income jobs than such transfers have typically included in the past; jobs in financial analysis, research, accounting, and graphic design are among those expected to be moved offshore.)

In a society where many people buy on credit, counting on ever expanding good fortune, the decline in income from job displacement is especially hard to bear financially. It is hard to bear psychologically as well. As the anthropologist Katherine Newman observed in *Falling From Grace: Downward Mobility in the Age of Affluence* (1988), the downwardly mobile family "jealously guards its public face, even if this means that everyone must eat a dreary diet so that the children can have some stylish clothes for school." Displays of desperation by these families are presumably kept within the walls of homes they can no longer afford.

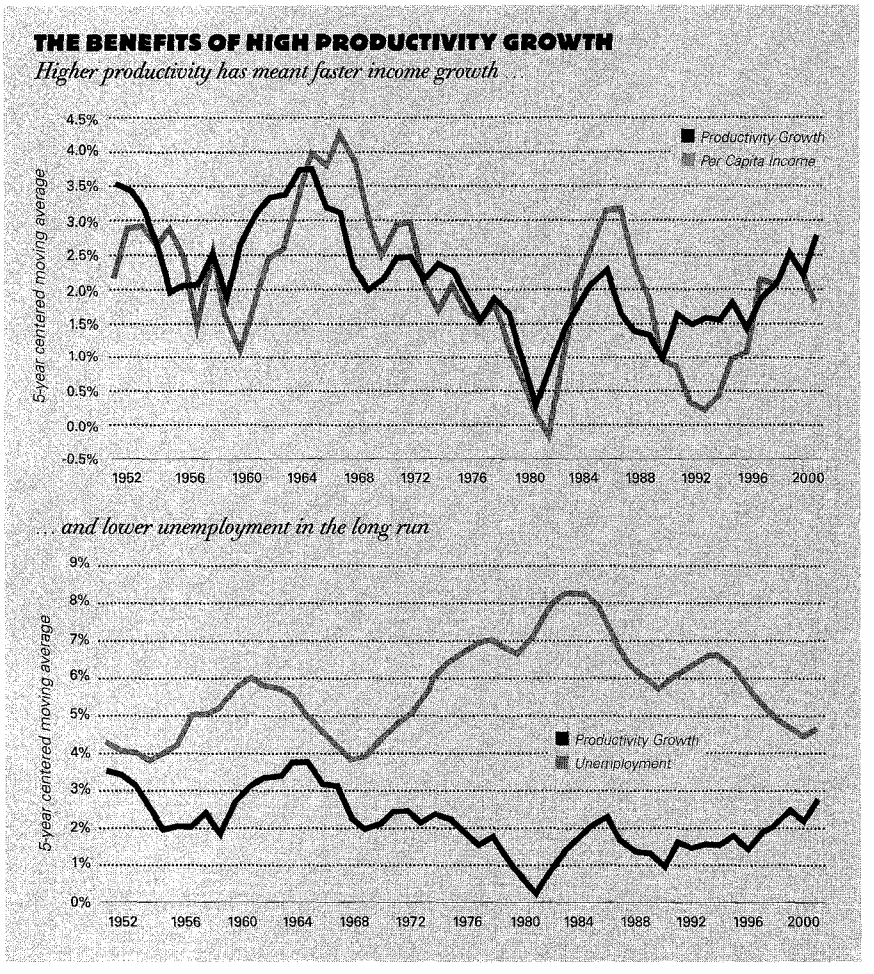

CHART DATA SOURCES: (OPPOSITE) LABOR MARKET LEFT BEHIND, BERNSTEIN AND MISHEL, ECONOMIC POLICY INSTITUTE. (RIGHT) BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS; NATIONAL INCOME & PRODUCT ACCOUNTS, BUREAU OF ECONOMIC ANALYSIS

THE MIRACLE OF AMERICAN PRODUCTIVITY

But here's the rub: the force that has produced deepening problems for reverse-lottery winners is the same as the force that has produced good fortune for many more Americans: the sudden and continuing acceleration of labor-productivity growth over the past eight years. Rising productivity is driving much of the change in American society. Yet its role is often misunderstood.

As the economy has pushed through its second year of jobless recovery, the media have mistakenly cast rapid productivity growth as the villain in a simplistic contest between people and technology. If productivity rises, this story goes, fewer people can generate the same output, and (all else being equal) unemployment will go up; if four workers can produce as much as five could only eight years ago, why hire the fifth? In the short term this is true; rising productivity has almost certainly helped to suppress new hiring after the recession. But beyond the short term this story is simply wrong. And it misses the bigger picture entirely.

Productivity growth is the bedrock of a healthy economy over time. In fact, continued rapid growth in productivity is certainly the best—and arguably the most important—feature of the U.S. economy today. It is no accident that past eras of high productivity growth (such as the 1920s and the 1950s) coincided with a national climate of energy and optimism. An annual productivity growth rate of 1.4 percent (roughly the average from 1973 to 1995) causes real national income to double every fifty years; increase the rate to 2.8 percent (roughly the average in the 1950s and 1960s), and real national income will double in just twenty-six years, and nearly

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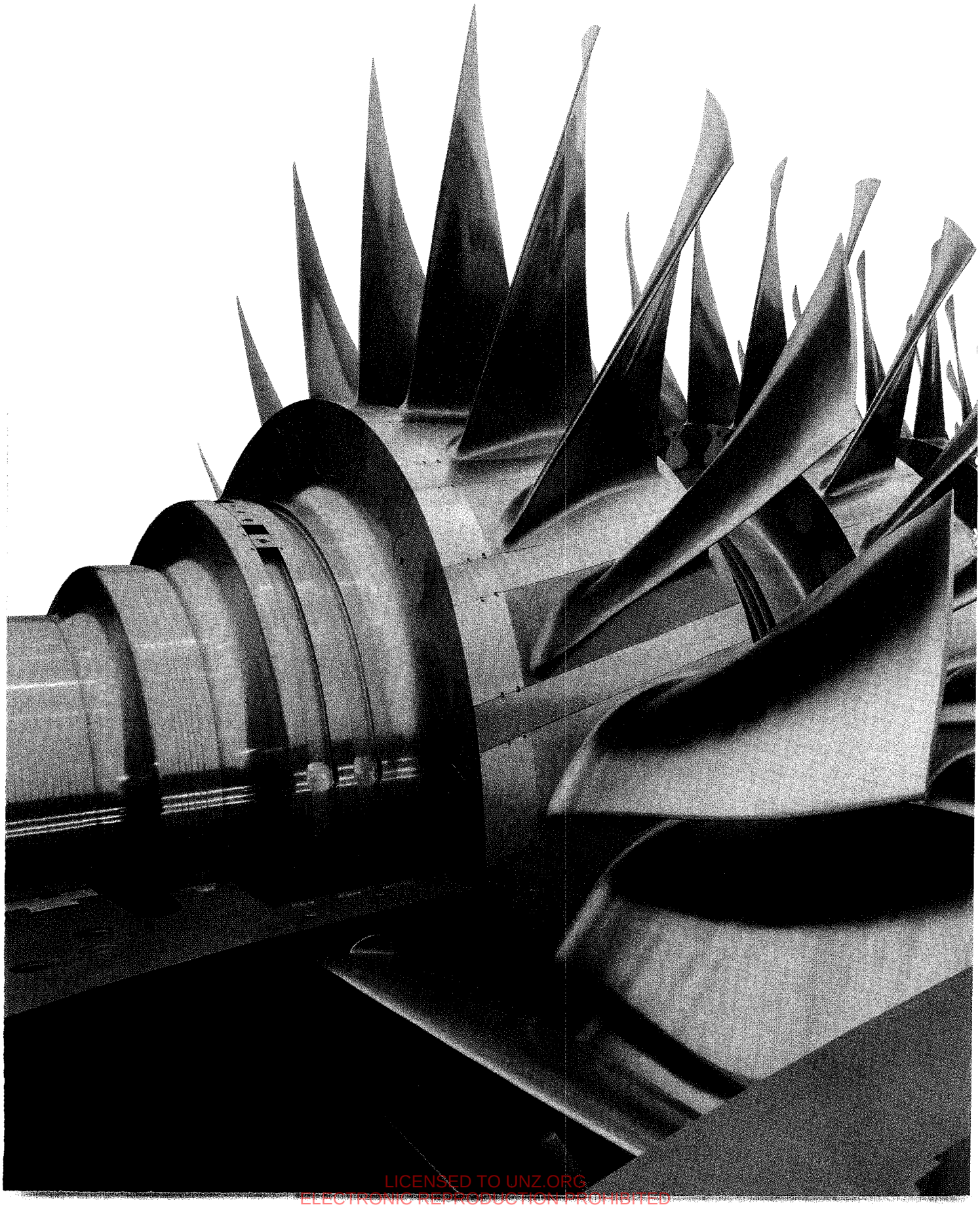

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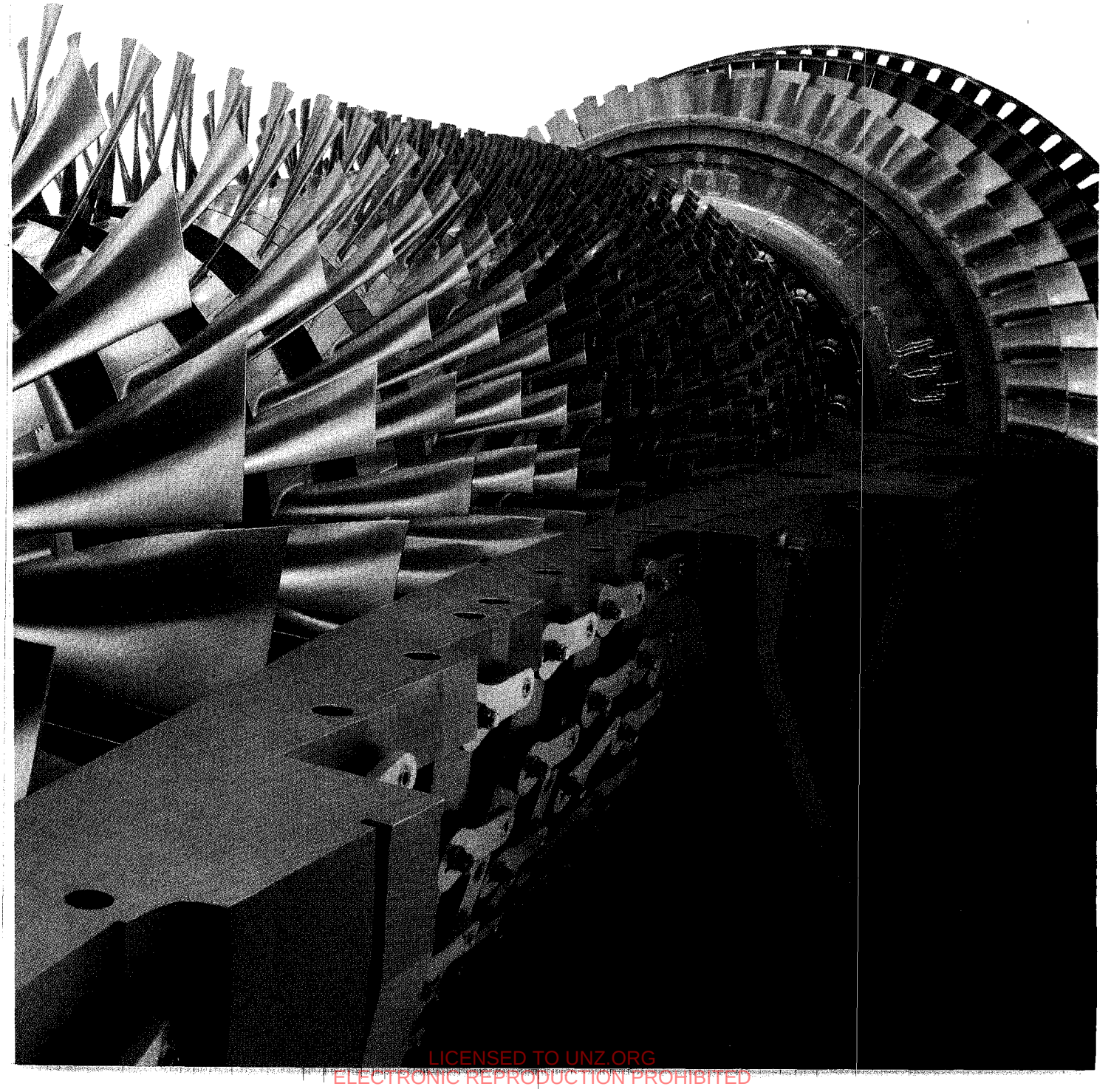

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quadruple in fifty years. Throughout the second half of the twentieth century unemployment was lowest and real wages grew fastest during eras of rapid productivity gains. In some individual years, of course, high productivity growth coincided with high unemployment or low wage growth; but over a longer period of time—say, five years or more—high productivity growth has consistently buoyed both incomes and employment.

Since the sudden acceleration in productivity growth eight years ago, economists have worried that it might prove ephemeral, or even illusory—the result of either a short-lived technology boom or an exceptionally strong (and unsustainable) increase in demand. But these concerns have diminished markedly over the past three years: demand has cooled, and the high-tech bubble has burst, yet productivity growth has continued unabated. In fact, from 1995 to 2002 labor productivity grew at an average rate of 2.8 percent a year, matching the rate of the post–World War II "golden era" that lasted from 1948 to 1973. That's almost double the rate of growth from 1973 to 1995, and nearly one percentage point more than the annual average for the twentieth century as a whole. There is even evidence that productivity growth may be continuing to accelerate; from 2001 through the first half of 2003 (a period that included a recession, which typically slows productivity growth) it averaged an annual rate of about 4.1 percent. In 2002, the most recent year for which complete data are available, productivity grew by 4.8 percent—the highest annual increase since 1950. (One must be careful in interpreting these last figures: productivity growth typically accelerates in the early stages of economic recovery, and figures are often revised downward over time, as more-extensive data become available. Nonetheless, at an absolute minimum there is no sign of a falloff in growth.)

The lesson here is that the New Economy is real. Most economists now believe that productivity—and living standards—will continue to rise rapidly over the next five to ten years (according to many of the estimates productivity will rise by two to three percent a year). The advances in information technology—particularly in computer processing power—that helped launch the boom have not slowed. Meanwhile, productivity growth in nontechnological industries, which remained low through much of the mid-1990s, has accelerated, as managers begin to integrate cheaper, more powerful information technology into their businesses. (Indeed, the real exemplar of the New Economy may be not Kozmo.com—the Internet courier that burned through $280 million in venture capital before going bust—but Wal-Mart, the ubiquitous discount chain that has pioneered ways of using information-technology advances to cut costs.) Interestingly, the pattern we are now witnessing—productivity growth rippling from industry to industry after the initial acceleration in computer production—is similar to the pattern that followed the development of another "transformative technology": the electric generator. In this case the resulting boom in productivity lasted well over a decade.

High productivity growth in recent years has also allowed most Americans to enjoy wage growth even as unemployment has risen. And relatively high employment levels and continued wage growth most likely contributed to relatively strong consumer demand throughout the recession, mitigating its effects.

Over the longer term broad-based productivity gains should mean not only higher incomes for most Americans but also cheaper products and more-competitive U.S. industries. The widespread diffusion of new technology will probably continue to give rise to products and services that would have been neither technologically feasible nor widely affordable just a few years ago. (Recent examples of such products include cell phones and iPods.) The combination of higher incomes and new products should spur both demand and production—and over the long run these will produce new jobs. Theoretically it's possible to conceive of a future in which productivity gains yield no new, widely adopted products; in which consumer confidence and consumer demand never rise despite rising incomes; and in which employment therefore remains stagnant or even in decline. But history suggests that such a future is quite unlikely.

- **THE LATE 1990S WERE AN ACCIDENTAL ECONOMIC GOLDEN AGE REPRESENTING THE CONFLUENCE OF LARGELY UNSUSTAINABLE FACTORS.**
- **THE SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT LONG-TERM INDICATOR OF ECONOMIC PROGRESS IS PRODUCTIVITY GROWTH—AND PRODUCTIVITY HAS RISEN FAST.**
- **WE HAVE ENTERED A "REVERSE-LOTTERY ECONOMY," IN WHICH MOST WORKERS PROSPER THROUGH BOTH BOOM AND RECESSION WHILE A GROWING MINORITY OF WORKERS SUFFER LENGTHY REDUCTIONS IN LIVING STANDARDS.**
- **TWO KEY FACTORS THAT HAVE GIVEN THE U.S. ECONOMY A COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE—A SUPERIOR EDUCATION SYSTEM AND AN ATTRACTIVE INVESTMENT CLIMATE—NOW APPEAR TO BE ERODING.**

WINNERS AND LOSERS

For all the good that rapid productivity growth has yielded, its benefits have not been felt equally by all Americans—even among those who have managed to avoid layoffs. Nor is productivity growth by any means the only factor shaping our fortunes; other forces, more sweeping and just as fundamental, have pushed and pulled the various socioeconomic classes in different directions. Which of these forces prevails will go a long way toward determining the depth of class division in the United States in the coming years.

Viewed through the lens of class politics, one of the most striking ele-

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ments of the past quarter century has been what Gary Burtless, an economist at the Brookings Institution, calls "the slow erosion of bargaining power" among low-income and middle-income workers. Better information technology and more-sophisticated robotics have significantly reduced job opportunities for many types of "routine" laborers, such as factory workers and middle managers, especially as globalized production has allowed U.S. companies to move many jobs—particularly low- and middle-skilled jobs—to countries where wages are lower. Increased global competition and the aggressive expectations of the financial markets (mainly in the form of shareholders demanding increased earnings per share every quarter) have eroded traditional managerial notions of "fairness" in setting wages and benefits and replaced them with a relentless focus on reducing cost; many companies now refuse to pay workers more than their immediate ability to contribute justifies, regardless of how old they are, how long they've worked for the company, or how much they've earned in the past. On top of all this, increased immigration of low-skilled workers since 1970 has disproportionately increased the labor supply at the lower end of the economy, probably depressing wages for less skilled workers.

This story—told repeatedly in recent years—is clearly reflected in the numbers. Between 1973 and 1995, while real wages for the top five percent of Americans rose (and while total income for the top five percent of American households increased by about 30 percent), the bottom half of the American work force experienced an outright decline in real wages. Median hourly wages declined from $12.54 to $10.44 per hour.

But the numbers—and the story they reflect—changed in the mid-1990s. Since then, the upward pressure on wages associated with rapid productivity growth has been stronger than the downward pressure on the pay of many low- and middle-skilled workers that automation and the decline of benign corporate paternalism generates. Thus even socioeconomic classes that should be made worse off by the *fact* of technological changes (because technology displaces them from their jobs) may be left better off by the rapid *pace* of it (because wages rise and the job market tightens). This is basically the story of the late 1990s. Despite technological advances, continual corporate restructurings, and heavy job churning, the wages and incomes of workers of every socioeconomic status and education level increased, while the growth in income inequality slowed down. Globalization, immigration, and the substitution of machinery for labor have not stopped exerting powerful forces on the economy since 1995—but the effects of rapid productivity and economic growth have been even more powerful.

The poor have done well, relatively speaking, in this economic environment. Jobs in such sectors as retail sales, hotel services, and basic health-care provision have proved tough to automate, and so haven't been substituted out of existence. Moreover, because jobs in the service sector—where the most low-skilled jobs have been created in recent years—are less affected by recession than are jobs in manufacturing, employment has been remarkably stable for the poor. And real wages for "McJobs," though still low in absolute terms, rose during the late 1990s as rapid economic growth tightened the labor market. Job growth and wage growth at the lower end of the economy—along with welfare reform—helped lift millions of people out of poverty since the mid-1990s; and a large portion of them have stayed out, even through the recent recession.

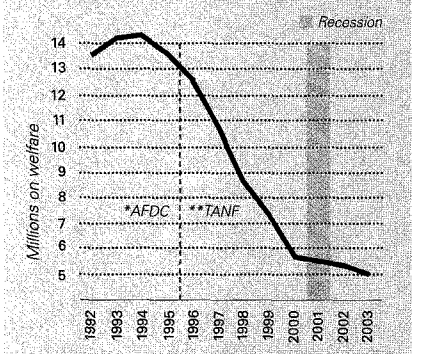
The middle class, too, has done well recently. And although the New Economy has eliminated certain kinds of middle-class jobs, it has created others. Manufacturing, for instance, continues its slow decline, but construction work and other high-paying blue-collar fields have grown significantly since 1995; and technologically driven "job destruction" in middle management is outweighed by strong growth overall in white-collar fields. In short, concerns about an emerging job market in which some jobs pay six figures, many jobs pay minimum wages, and a few jobs exist in between appear overwrought. As unemployment began to rise in 2000, real median incomes did falter somewhat—but at the end of 2002 they were still six percent higher than in 1995, and 21 percent higher than in 1970.

The contradictory forces that pull the middle-class and the poor up while simultaneously pushing them down have tended to push the wealthy and well-educated in only one direction: upward. Advances in information technology have complemented the skills of workers in analytic occupations (such as management consultants, financial analysts, and marketing executives), hence raising these workers' value. Globalization has almost certainly created more opportunities for this class of workers than it has eliminated; white-collar U.S. workers are now able to manage, advise, or provide analysis for a growing number of international plants and businesses. The shift toward a "winner-take-all" society has produced rapid pay increases for executives and high-end professionals. (And large reductions in the upper tax brackets have allowed high earners to keep more of their pay.)

Though growth in inequality slowed in the late 1990s, it did not stop; while

OFF THE DOLE...

Since 1994 the welfare rolls have declined. Remarkably, they continued to decline through the recession and beyond



*Aid to Families with Dependent Children
**Temporary Assistance for Needy Families

...AND OUT OF POVERTY

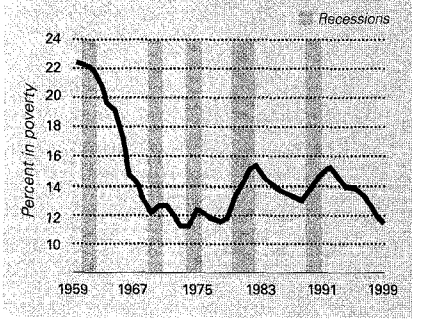


CHART DATA SOURCES: (TOP) ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES, U.S. DEPT. OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES; (BOTTOM) *THE STATE OF WORKING AMERICA 2002-2003*, MISHEL, BERNSTEIN, AND BOUSJEY, ECONOMIC POLICY INSTITUTE

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incomes rose at every socioeconomic level, they rose fastest for the workers who were already earning the most money. Without significant policy shifts—toward much higher marginal income-tax rates for high earners, for example, or an immigration policy that strongly favors skilled immigrants over unskilled ones—the rich are likely to continue to pull away economically (and perhaps culturally and socially, as well) from the rest of society.

At the moment it appears to be an open question whether in the coming years the middle class and the poor will advance quickly (as they did in the late 1990s) or stagnate (as they did throughout much of the 1970s and 1980s). We're poised on the cusp between broad-based wealth creation and stagnation: while productivity growth has helped keep wages rising for the employed, immigration and the continued movement of jobs to offshore locations weakens the labor market and depresses wages. Given the continuing rapid pace of innovation and productivity growth, it appears likely that broad-based income gains will eventually resume, and that the prevailing conditions of the next several years will more closely resemble those of the late 1990s than those of the 1970s. But for that to be assured of happening, unemployment will need to drop significantly below six percent. And however much the typical middle- or working-class family sees its income rise on an absolute basis, the incomes of the richest families will likely improve even faster.

SMOOTHING CAPITALISM'S ROUGH EDGES

Whether or not the fortunes of the various socioeconomic strata rise or fall together in the future, the fortunes of individuals—regardless of what class they hail from—are more volatile today. For some workers rapid improvements in income and socioeconomic status may be punctuated by sudden and painful declines in both. This volatility has become one of the defining attributes of the economy.

The flexibility of the American labor market—its ability to shift workers quickly from fading companies or industries to growing ones—is among the U.S. economy's greatest assets; but such rapid shifts are often bad for individual workers, at least temporarily. (For older workers, or for people who lack geographic mobility, these negative reversals are more likely to be permanent. A married worker, for example, may fare worse than other workers after being laid off, especially if a spouse's job has anchored the family to a particular community.) And many traditional remedies for worker displacement, such as protectionism and inflexible labor laws, are often rightly considered to hurt the nation's economic competitiveness.

But there may be ways to help displaced workers without harming the economy. In "Are We Still a Middle-Class Nation?" (page 120) Michael Lind proposes that the federal government grant equity-market stakes to every citizen, so that all Americans, not just the richest, might draw extra income from investments.

For both political and practical reasons Lind's plan would take time to implement. For the shorter term Robert Litan, an economist at the Brookings Institution, and Lori Kletzer, an economist at the University of California at Santa Cruz, have proposed a fairly inexpensive extension of unemployment insurance to cover workers who find new jobs that pay much less than their old ones. "Wage insurance" would make up a portion of the difference between old and new incomes for up to two years, so that the transition to a lower-income lifestyle would be more gradual. (A pilot program already exists for workers displaced by the movement of jobs overseas.) But wage insurance has potential as more than just a safety net; if unemployed workers knew they could more easily afford to take lower-paying jobs, they might feel freer to jump into whole new industries or career tracks; this would help the economy grow faster (by increasing the speed at which new industries grow) and might also ultimately increase the long-term income prospects of individual workers.

A more radical variation on this concept comes from Robert Shiller, an economist at Yale, who believes that continuing financial-market innovations may soon enable private insurers to offer "livelihood insurance" that could protect workers from potential declines in their occupations (though not against an individual worker's underperformance within a flourishing field). Similar products might insure against the eventual devaluation of specific academic degrees in the United States (such as those in software engineering or Russian language), or even against declines in the performance of the U.S. economy as a whole, relative to the rest of the world. (As Shiller notes, the fact that the past century was a good one for America does not necessarily mean that the next one will be.) Collectively, these products might lessen the large and arguably increasing risks inherent in the U.S. capitalist system.

These are bold ideas; it may be hard at first to wrap one's mind around them. And it is perhaps ironic that financial markets—which are regarded by many people as amoral if not immoral—might ultimately solve some of the problems that socialist and utopian thinkers have been trying for centuries to address. But as improbable as livelihood insurance may sound, advances in data collection, data analysis, and financial-risk theory are lowering the technical barriers to such a system. Government action could help the creation of livelihood insurance on a large scale. Part of the government's role would be technical—for instance setting the standards for the collection and sharing of personal income data that are necessary if livelihood insurance is to work. But two equally important tasks would be the articulation of a new vision of society—one where people are protected against the unexpected shocks that accompany rapid economic change—and the promotion of financial-services products that can sustain that vision. Without large markets covering a wide range of occupations, carriers offering livelihood insurance might have difficulty hedging their risk sufficiently.

Economists argue that the benefits of technological advance, freer trade, and greater competition are great enough that when—as inevitably happens—some people suffer as a result of these forces, those people can in theory be fully compensated for their losses.

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But in practice such workers are rarely, if ever, compensated—and the consequences of the setbacks they suffer are more severe in the New Economy than they were in the past. Our economic (and political) system can tolerate a certain level of inequality resulting from differences in ability and work ethic (though just how much is an open question). But too often inequality is gratuitous; many people's economic fortunes are buffeted by factors they cannot reasonably predict and over which they have no personal control. As a society we should seek to minimize the randomness of fortune that is inherent in democratic capitalism.

THE LONG TERM

It is hard to say at any given point in time what the exact best recipe for growth is; economic and business environments vary widely from boom to bust. Yet when they stand back from the vicissitudes of the business cycle and consider longer periods of time, most economists agree that three factors are crucial for rapid, sustainable economic growth: new ideas and the technologies they create; business investment in new technologies and equipment; and ample "human capital": the collective skills and knowledge of the work force.

In 2000, though expectations of what the stock market and the economy in general could produce were wildly unrealistic, there was genuine cause for optimism. Ideas and innovations were proliferating. Investment in these ideas and the technologies they created was considerable. And a flexible, highly educated work force stood ready to adopt new technologies quickly, and to generate still more innovations for the future.

Three years later these conditions—a decline in the level of business investment notwithstanding—remain largely in place. Moreover, technologies and business practices developed before the bust (and not yet fully exploited) have generated a momentum that should help the economy over the next several years.

The long-term picture, however, may be bleaker. Two key factors that have historically given the U.S. economy a competitive advantage—a superior education system and an attractive investment climate—now appear to be eroding.

To a substantial degree America's economic strength during the twentieth century was attributable to the quality of its education system, and in particular to the expansion of educational opportunity to a large proportion of its citizens. America began that century with the world's best-educated population, and spent much of the next hundred years further improving its standing. In 1940, 30 percent of American workers had graduated from high school and fewer than six percent had graduated from college. By 2000, 89 percent had graduated from high school and 28 percent had graduated from college. Overall, Americans born in 1975 spent nearly twice as many years in school as Americans born a century earlier.

Over the past twenty years, however, this trend has markedly slowed, and is expected to do so further in the coming decades. Whereas from 1980 through 2000 the proportion of the labor force with a college education increased by 8.6 percent, over the next twenty years that proportion is expected to increase by only 1.5 to five percent—despite the fact that the financial benefits of a college education have been increasing. In most other economically advanced countries the average number of years people stay in school is now growing faster than it is in the United States—and young adults in a handful of those countries are now more highly educated, on average, than their U.S. counterparts. Ever since the launch of *Sputnik*, in the late 1950s, Americans have been concerned—perhaps excessively so—with the *quality* of the education that U.S. citizens receive. But only more recently has the United States seen its relative advantage in *quantity* of education begin to decline.

The consequences of this stagnation must color any discussion of the future of the U.S. economy. (Two of its main causes are discussed elsewhere in "State of the Union." See "The Other Gender Gap," page 137, and "The Tuition Crunch," page 140.) As the rate at which we produce college graduates begins to slow the rate at which the U.S. economy creates and adopts new technologies and products will also slow. Income inequality will no doubt grow: the smaller the supply of college graduates, the higher the incomes they are likely to command. And the larger the supply of less-educated workers, the lower their wages will be. Indeed, every high school student who chooses not to attend college hurts not only his own income prospects but also (by adding to the pool of workers competing for low-skill jobs) those of other less-educated workers.

Just as our declining educational progress threatens the ability of the work force to absorb innovations quickly, so the deterioration of the government's fiscal position undermines the willingness of firms to invest in new technologies. The long-term fiscal problems of the federal government are covered in detail elsewhere in this feature (see "The $45 Trillion Problem," page 146). Suffice it to say here that the size of the budget deficit can have a real impact on the

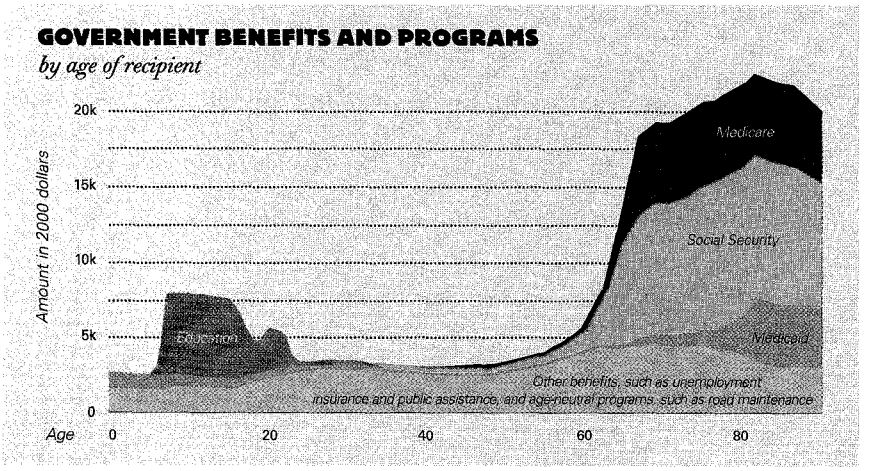

CHART DATA SOURCE: *THE FISCAL BENEFITS OF POPULATION AGING IN THE U.S.: ASSESSING THE UNCERTAINTIES*, RONALD LEE AND RYAN EDWARDS, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

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economy. Whereas low levels of debt keep interest rates down and inspire the confidence of foreign investors, high levels of debt ultimately discourage private investment by raising interest rates. It is no coincidence that as the federal budget swung into surplus in the second half of the 1990s, after a period of annual deficits averaging almost four percent of GDP in the early part of that decade, domestic investment as a share of GDP rose, by 3.5 percent. And although the country has managed to survive periods of high and rising debt in the past without calamity (in the late 1980s, for example, and during World War II), we are embarked on a period of deepening annual deficits of unprecedented size, with no end in sight. According to the Congressional Budget Office, if the government does not make significant changes in spending or taxation, debt will mount rapidly over the next few years, reaching $10 trillion by 2010—and that's before it begins an exponential increase as the Baby Boom enters retirement.

The long-term fiscal crisis facing the United States comes primarily from a growing imbalance between what the government spends—primarily on Medicare and Social Security—and what it reaps in taxes, which were not high enough to sustain current entitlements even before the series of sharp tax cuts enacted since 2000. Today we're simply foisting the many costs of this imbalance—rising debt, slower growth, and ultimately either higher taxes or broken promises—onto future generations.

A reasonable observer might conclude that all these problems are the ingredients for national economic decline. Historically, America has been an adaptable, resilient nation; decline is not inevitable. But unless we devote more attention to education and fiscal balance, two issues that are absolutely central to long-term prosperity, the conditions that have produced widespread growth will dissipate. As weak as today's economy may look relative to that of 1999, at the rate we're going we may look back on 2003–2004 in ten or twenty years with wistful longing. ■

—*THE EDITORS*

[*The Economy*]

Are We Still a Middle-Class Nation?

It's no accident that the United States has always been an economic paradise for the middle class—that class was invented and reinvented by the government. Now the government needs to reinvent it again—before it's too late

BY MICHAEL LIND

In 1909 Herbert Croly, the founding editor of *The New Republic* and one of the patron saints of the twentieth-century progressive-liberal tradition, published his manifesto, *The Promise of American Life*. "The Promise of America," he wrote, "has consisted largely in the opportunity which it offered of economic independence and prosperity." According to Croly,

> The native American, like the alien immigrant, conceives the better future which awaits himself and other men in America as fundamentally a future in which economic prosperity will be still more abundant and still more accessible than it has yet been either here or abroad ... With all their professions of Christianity their national idea remains thoroughly worldly ... The Promise, which bulks so large in their patriotic outlook, is a promise of comfort and prosperity for an ever increasing majority of good Americans.

The idea that the promise of American life lay in widespread material prosperity as much as in civil liberties or political democracy is an old one. As Croly pointed out, in 1782 Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur wrote in his *Letters From an American Farmer*,

> What, then is the American, this new man? ... Wives and children, who before in vain demanded of him a morsel of bread, now, fat and frolicsome, gladly help their father to clear those fields, whence exuberant crops are to arise to feed and to clothe them all; without any part being claimed, either by a despotic prince, a rich abbot, or a mighty lord ... From involuntary idleness, servile dependence, penury, and useless labor, he has passed to toils of a very different nature, rewarded by ample subsistence. This is an American.

The equation of America with widespread middle-class prosperity persists today. Of the millions of people who came to the United States following the resumption of large-scale immigration in the last third of the twentieth century, a few were refugees from political or religious persecution. Most, however, wanted what previous generations of European immigrants had sought: "America has been peopled by Europeans primarily because they expected in that country to make more money more easily," Herbert Croly wrote.

America, then, is not simply the land of political liberty. It has always also been an economic paradise for the middle class—at least until now.

A HISTORY OF THE MIDDLE CLASS

What exactly does it mean to say that the United States is a middle-class society?

In the pre-modern societies of Europe the terms "burgher" (German) and "bourgeoisie" (French) referred to the minority of largely urban merchants and professionals who were above the peasant majority and below the minority of landholding aristocrats. But when Americans talk about the middle class, they are not talking about burghers or the bourgeoisie. What makes the United States and similar societies middle-class is the economic predominance of the middling sort, no matter what their major source of employment happens to be.

Thus the American middle class has migrated from sector to sector over the past two centuries. The "fat and frolicsome" yeoman farmers of Crèvecoeur and Jefferson became the well-paid factory workers of William McKinley and Henry Ford, and then moved to

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the suburbs to become white-collar "organization men" (or, less frequently, women) after World War II. Over the years the social prestige of various economic sectors rose as the middle-class center of gravity passed through them. In medieval England "clown" and "villain" were words for the farmer who later became the symbol of middle-class rural America. In the eighteenth century yeoman farmers and aristocrats alike despised the "greasy mechanic," who by the early twentieth century had been promoted to middle-class factory worker. In the fiction of Victorian Britain and Gilded Age America the office worker was a miserable, stunted figure—Scrooge's assistant Bob Cratchit, or Bartleby the scrivener. But after World War II the cringing, bleary-eyed clerk became the confident professional who left his suburban home armed with a briefcase—Ward Cleaver, of *Leave It to Beaver*.

To most of us, the transition from farmer to industrial worker to service worker—sometimes within three generations of one family—appears in retrospect to have been inevitable, like some geological process. Indeed, many conservatives and libertarians seem to believe that a mass middle class is an inevitable by-product of capitalism. The truth is that each of America's successive middle classes has been artificially created by government-sponsored social engineering—a fact that is profoundly important for us to admit as we think about the future of middle-class America.

Consider the first American middle class, composed of yeoman farmers. There could never have been a mass agricultural middle class in the United States without vast quantities of cheap farmland, divided up into small farms.

From 1800 to 1848 the U.S. government acquired more than two million square miles of territory, much of it arable, by purchase or negotiation (the Louisiana Territory from France in 1803; Florida from Spain in 1819; Oregon from Britain in 1846), by annexation (Texas, 1845), or by conquest (the Mexican Cession in 1848). Populists sought to ensure that this land went to small farmers rather than large landowners or speculators. The danger of European-style feudalism in the United States was neutralized by the land ordinance of 1785, which guaranteed that the federal domain would be broken up into "fee simple" properties, with no complex web of multiple ownership. And the Homestead Act of 1862 provided 160 acres of free public land to settlers who would live on it and improve it for at least five years. Meanwhile, the federal government subsidized continent-crossing railroads, and the Army Corps of Engineers built much of the country's rural infrastructure. This was social engineering on a colossal scale.

The story was similar for the second American middle class, made up of prosperous urban industrial workers. From Abraham Lincoln to Herbert Hoover, American politics was dominated by a bargain between capitalists and workers; high tariffs on imports served the interests of both, by protecting goods from foreign competition. In addition, the dominant industrial labor force successfully lobbied the government to protect it from competition with other groups. In the late nineteenth century Congress cut off "Oriental" immigration, and after World War I—with the support of organized labor—it cut large-scale European immigration. Before World War I informal discrimination prevented southern black Americans from moving to the Northeast and the Midwest to compete for industrial jobs. Finally, child-labor laws removed children from the work force, and "family wage" or "breadwinner" systems—which paid married fathers more than unmarried, childless men—encouraged married women to become homemakers. Today nostalgic conservatives attribute the prosperity of the 1920s to free enterprise. In reality the market was rigged.

A product of the early industrial era, the second American middle class was largely limited to the industrial states of the Northeast and the Midwest. Unlike the factory workers in those states, the rural majority in the South and the West did not share in the income gains from industrialization; tariffs were, in effect, a tax imposed on them to subsidize urban workers and capitalists. The protectionist system also hurt the professional elite, because it raised prices on high-end consumer goods. Economics goes a long way toward explaining why elite progressives from the North teamed up with southern and western populists in the New Deal coalition that lasted from 1932 until the 1960s. The New Dealers created the third American middle class.

Whereas the second American middle class was founded on high wages for workers in the industrial sector, the third American middle class was founded on the supplementation of wage income by government benefits that collectively constituted a "social wage." The social wage included not only private-sector benefits encouraged by the tax code, such as employer-provided health insurance, but also subsidies such as the home-mortgage-interest deduction and government entitlements such as Social Security and Medicare (which freed many middle-class families from the bankrupting burden of caring for elderly parents), the GI Bill

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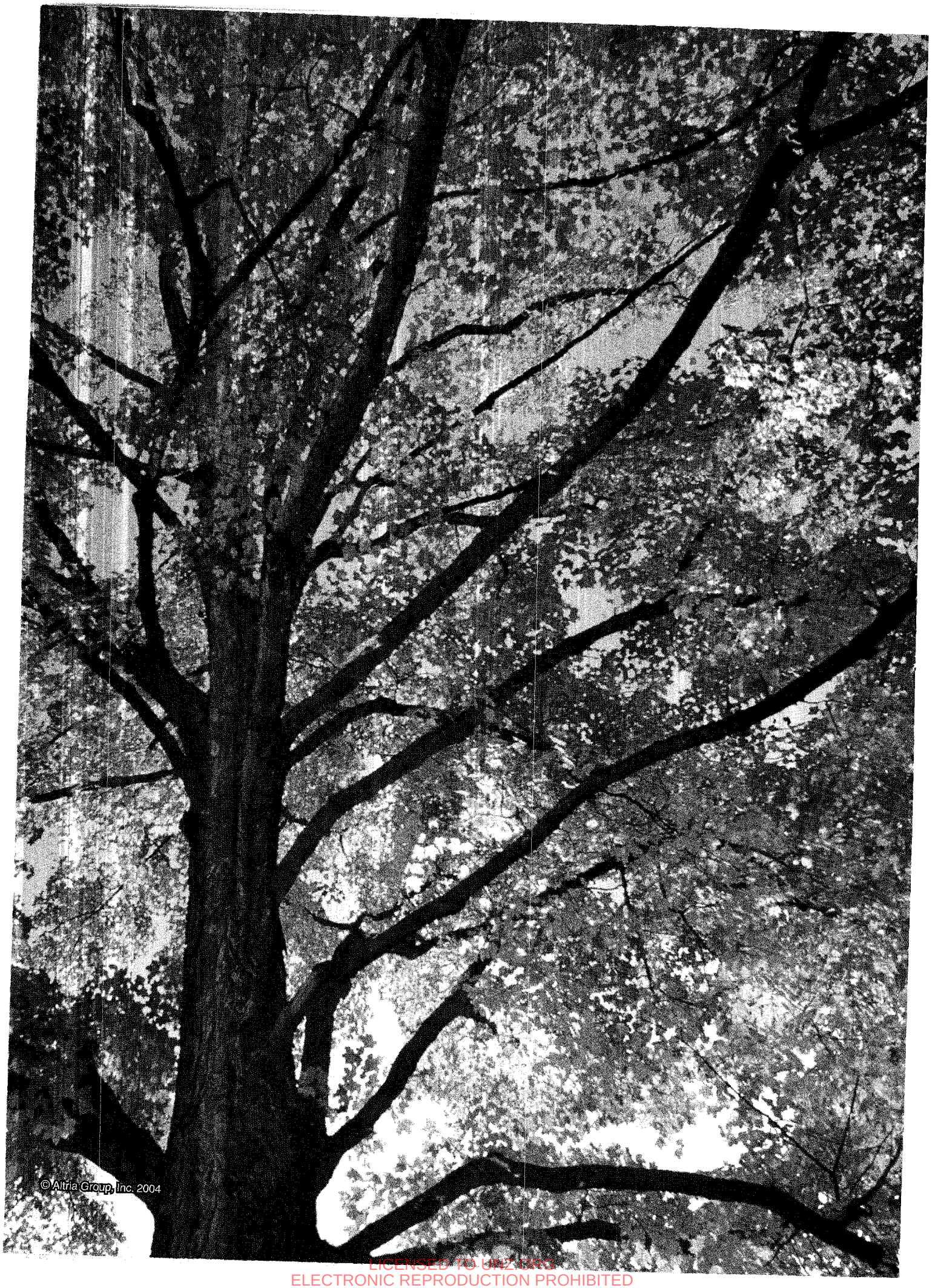

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What is Altria?

Altria Group, Inc. is a parent company whose roots are firmly planted in success, through years of strong financial performance and global reach.

A parent company whose branches are blue chip operating companies: Kraft Foods, Philip Morris International and Philip Morris USA.

From these branches grow many brands each worth a billion dollars or more, like Marlboro, Nabisco and Oscar Mayer.

Along with hundreds of other household names such as Altoids, Parliament, Post and Ritz.

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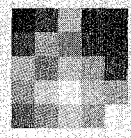

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for higher education, and student loans. As the Yale political scientist Jacob Hacker has pointed out, when the hidden welfare state is counted along with the visible welfare state, the United States has a system of social provision as generous as those in Western Europe—though in this country much of that system extends only to the middle class and the professional elite.

The social-wage system had many flaws—for example, it failed to provide health insurance for tens of millions of Americans. Nevertheless, the third American middle class, the product of Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal, Harry Truman's Fair Deal, and Lyndon Johnson's Great Society, was larger and more inclusive than the earlier two. From the 1930s to the 1970s income inequality in America shrank dramatically, producing what the economic historians Claudia Goldin and Robert Margo have called the Great Compression.

WHAT OUR CHILDREN MIGHT DO FOR A LIVING...

Occupations with the largest projected job growth

OCCUPATION	PROJECTED INCREASE 2000–2010	MEDIAN ANNUAL WAGE 2002
Combined food preparation and serving, including fast food	+673,000	$14,500
Customer-service rep	+631,000	$26,240
Registered nurse	+561,000	$48,090
Retail salesperson	+510,000	$17,710
Computer support specialist	+490,000	$39,100
Cashier, except gaming	+474,000	$15,420
Office clerk, general	+430,000	$22,280
Security guard	+391,000	$19,140
Computer software engineer, applications	+380,000	$70,900
Waiter and waitress	+364,000	$14,150

...AND WHAT THEY PROBABLY WON'T

Occupations with the largest projected decline

OCCUPATION	PROJECTED DECREASE 2000–2010	MEDIAN ANNUAL WAGE 2002
Farmer and rancher	–328,000	$17,090
Order clerk	–71,000	$24,810
Teller	–59,000	$20,400
Insurance-claim and policy-processing clerk	–58,000	$28,870
Word processor and typist	–57,000	$26,730
Sewing-machine operator	–51,000	$17,440
Dishwasher	–42,000	$14,860
Switchboard operator, including answering service	–41,000	$21,190
Loan interviewer and clerk	–38,000	$27,830
Computer operator	–33,000	$29,650

CHART DATA SOURCE: BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS

FEAR OF FALLING

By the beginning of the twenty-first century, however, economic changes were threatening the third American middle class. In the 1970s an increasing number of U.S. corporations started to transfer production jobs and certain service jobs to low-wage workers abroad. This process accelerated through the 1980s and 1990s, as the demise of communism and the rise in many Third World countries of export-oriented development strategies greatly enlarged the global market for both skilled and unskilled labor. Although globalization helped the middle class in some ways, reducing the cost of such imports as toys from China and shoes from Indonesia, it destroyed the jobs—and undermined the bargaining power—of workers in sectors from automobile production to back-office services. Even if the United States had used protectionism to shield workers in every sector from foreign competition, an ever growing number of manufacturing and service jobs would still have been eliminated by technological innovations—a trend that will probably prove even more important than globalization over time.

Nevertheless, thanks to technologically driven increases in productivity, life has steadily gotten better for the majority of Americans. Advances in manufacturing and automation have slashed the prices of consumer appliances such as televisions and personal computers. At the same time, however, this kind of productivity growth threatens the middle class in three ways: by raising the costs of certain labor-intensive services necessary for a middle-class lifestyle; by changing the occupational structure; and by increasing inequality.

The disparity between rapid productivity growth in mechanized sectors and slow productivity growth in human-service jobs produces Baumol's disease—named after the economist William J. Baumol. According to Baumol, in a technological economy falling prices for manufactured goods and automated services eventually increase the relative cost of labor-intensive services such as nursing and teaching. Baumol has predicted that the share of gross domestic product spent on health care will rise from 11.6 percent in 1990 to 35 percent in 2040, while the share spent on education will rise from 6.7 percent to 29 percent.

The shifting of relative costs need not in itself be a problem. If Americans in 2050 or 2100 pay far more (as a percentage of their spending) for health care and education than they did in 1900, they may still be better off—if they pay correspondingly less for other goods and services. The problem is that as the relative cost of services like education and health care rises, more and more Americans will find themselves in service-sector jobs that, unlike the professions, have historically been low-wage.

Technology is changing the job market by shoving people out of sectors that can be mechanized or automated—factory production, data processing, clerical work—and into sectors requiring a human touch, from nursing to law. As the twenty-first century began, most jobs created were in non-unionized

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service sectors where wages were low because of a glut of labor and where the prospects for long-term productivity gains were minimal. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the following are among the occupations with the largest projected job growth from 2000 to 2010: combined food-preparation and serving, including fast food; customer-service representative; registered nurse; retail salesperson; computer-support specialist; cashier, except gaming; office clerk; security guard; computer-software engineer, applications; waiter; general or operations manager; truck driver, heavy and tractor-trailer; nursing aide, orderly, or attendant; janitor or cleaner, except maid or housekeeping cleaner; postsecondary teacher; teacher assistant; home health aide; laborer or freight, stock, and material mover, hand; computer-software engineer, systems software; landscaping or groundskeeping.

Some economists assert that increases in productivity will inevitably translate into higher wages throughout the economy. But this is a matter of faith, not fact. Baumol's analysis tends to undermine such easy optimism. Most productivity advances occur in mechanized and automated sectors, which employ a shrinking number of Americans; so how will the growing number of Americans in service jobs share the gains of high productivity growth?

In the absence of some system of private or public redistribution, then, there is no guarantee that rising national productivity will spontaneously and inevitably produce rising incomes and wealth for most Americans, rather than just windfalls for the fortunate few.

Since the 1970s inequality of both income and wealth in the United States has increased dramatically. As Paul Krugman has observed in *The New York Times*, a Congressional Budget Office report shows that from 1979 to 1997 the after-tax income of the top one percent of families climbed 157 percent, while middle-income Americans gained only 10 percent, and many of the poor actually lost ground. The share of after-tax income that goes to the top one percent of Americans has doubled in the past three decades; at 14 percent, it roughly equals the share of after-tax income that goes to the bottom 40 percent. The concentration of wealth at the upper levels of the population has been even more extreme.

To some degree, the explosion of inequality in both income and wealth has resulted from private and public policy, such as lavish compensation for CEOs, the reduction of taxes on the rich, and the immigration laws that permit a large influx of poor and unskilled workers. But more to the point, the productivity gains in heavily automated, capital-intensive sectors such as manufacturing, agriculture, banking, and other routine services have gone almost entirely to the investors who own the machines and the software, not to the workers who remain, and certainly not to the workers displaced into other sectors. Such an outcome would be likely even if all CEOs and wealthy investors were generous and public-spirited.

This is where economics turns into politics. It is doubtful that in any society with universal suffrage the majority is going to sit on the sidelines and watch, generation after generation, while a handful of investors and corporate managers reap almost all the benefits of technological and economic progress.

One way to prevent this is through labor protectionism—restricting immigration and restricting imports. Neither is likely to be politically feasible. Protectionism would raise the price of goods for working Americans. Restricting immigration, while raising the wages of those who compete with immigrants for jobs, would also make nursing and many other personal services prohibitively expensive for all but the affluent. Higher wages produced by a much higher minimum wage or by the unionization of the service sector (politically unlikely as these scenarios are) might backfire by encouraging a black market in goods and services.

- **THE MIDDLE CLASS IS NOT A FACT OF NATURE. IT IS PARTLY THE PRODUCT OF SOCIAL ENGINEERING BY THE GOVERNMENT.**
- **THERE HAVE BEEN THREE SUCCESSIVE MIDDLE CLASSES IN AMERICAN HISTORY: THE YEOMAN FARMER; THE INDUSTRIAL WORKER; AND TODAY'S MIDDLE CLASS, CREATED BY THE "SOCIAL WAGE" OF THE NEW DEAL AND THE GREAT SOCIETY.**
- **THE NUMBER OF HIGH-PAYING MIDDLE-CLASS JOBS IS SHRINKING WHILE THE NUMBER OF LOW-PAYING SERVICE JOBS IS INCREASING. MEANWHILE, THE COST OF LIVING FOR THE MIDDLE CLASS IS RISING.**
- **WE FACE THE POSSIBILITY OF A NEW FEUDALISM, IN WHICH MOST AMERICANS PROVIDE PERSONAL SERVICES FOR THE RICH FEW.**
- **THE SOLUTION MAY BE TO SUPPLEMENT THE "SOCIAL WAGE" WITH A "CAPITAL WAGE."**

THE NEXT MIDDLE CLASS

If we reject both a new feudalism (under which most Americans provide personal services for the rich few) and a regime of protectionism and immigration restriction (which would benefit some workers at the expense of others), then some system of redistribution will be necessary to ensure that the middle-class majority benefits from long-term productivity growth. This can take two forms: redistributing income and encouraging the widespread ownership of income-producing assets.

The most obvious way to share the gains from technological progress is to tax the owners of high-productivity industries at high levels and spend the proceeds on the rest of the population. To varying degrees in different coun-

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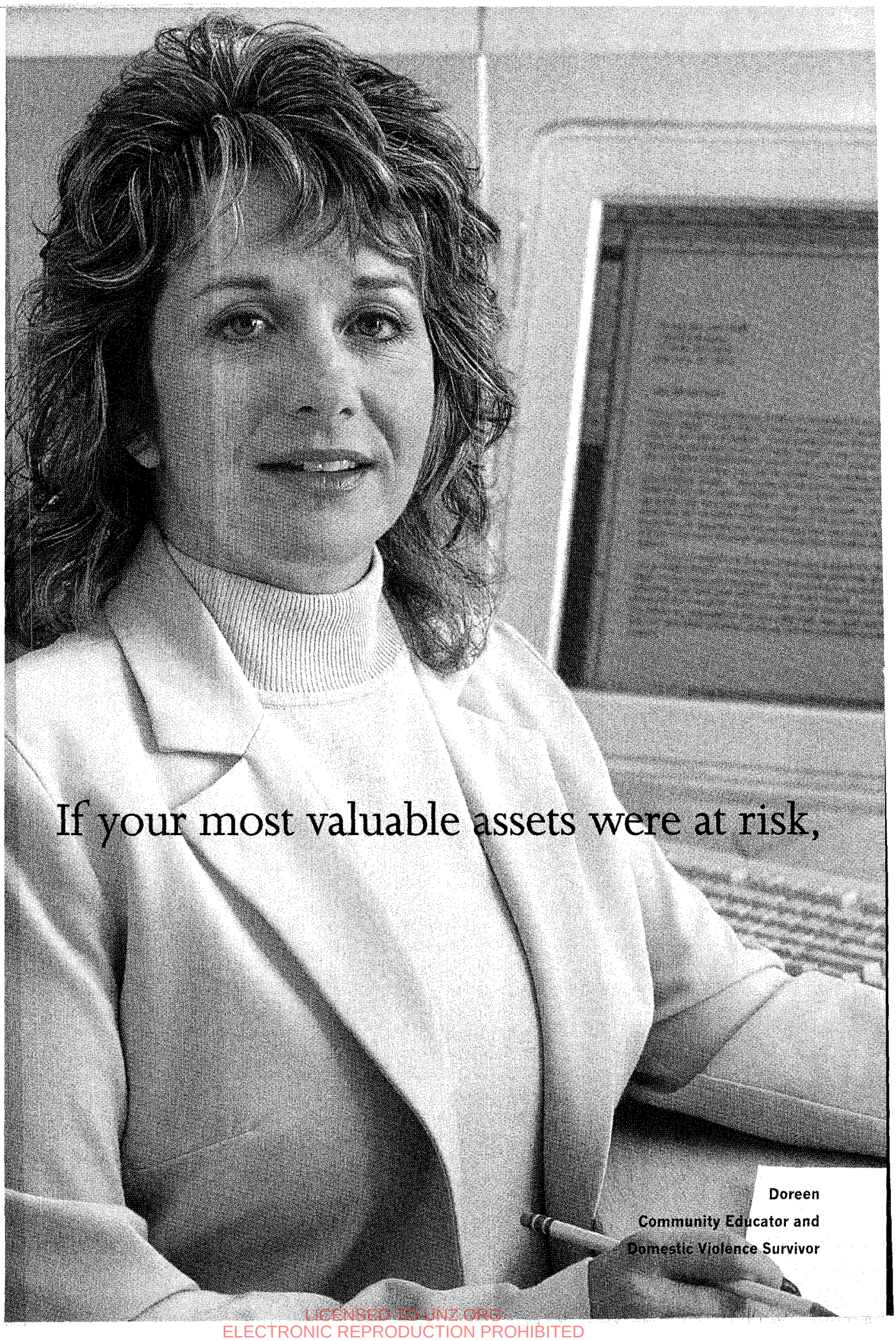

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Domestic Violence affects 1 in every 4 women.

It costs American businesses over $3 billion each year.

And your company can be part of the solution.

Domestic violence is the leading cause of injury to women in our country, and its impact extends from the home to the workplace. The result? Shattered lives and billions of dollars in business losses annually due to absenteeism, turnover, medical expenses and lower productivity.

That's why helping victims of domestic violence is your business. Your company can change lives by building awareness of the issue and providing a link to information about resources in your community.

Let your employees know their safety is important. A few steps can make all the difference to your business — and to someone like Doreen.

wouldn't you protect them?

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If you or one of your employees needs help, contact the National Domestic Violence Hotline:
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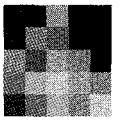

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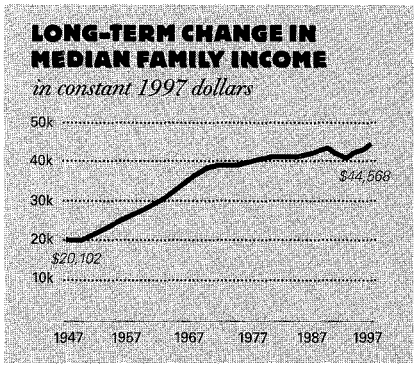
tries—more so in Sweden, less so in the United States—this is the system that now exists.

This "social wage" can take different forms. Some Americans prefer that the government provide universal services such as public schools and public health care. Others prefer voucher systems that permit a degree of individual choice. The social wage can likewise be either a supplement to incomes or a subsidy for goods. The earned-income tax credit, which has bipartisan support, supplements the incomes of low-wage workers to lift them out of poverty, and provides an alternative to raising the minimum wage. But there is also bipartisan support for tax breaks for homeowners, and for other subsidies on middle-class consumption.



In their groundbreaking book *The Two-Income Trap: Why Middle-Class Mothers and Fathers Are Going Broke*, Elizabeth Warren, of Harvard Law School, and her daughter Amelia Warren Tyagi demonstrate that fixed costs for the typical American middle-class family—home-mortgage payments, car payments, health insurance, child care, education, and taxes—have risen more rapidly than income over the past thirty years, eating up many of the gains from having two parents in the work force. According to the authors' analysis of government data, even when a two-earner family today brings in almost twice the income of a one-earner family in the 1970s (in inflation-adjusted constant dollars), the 1970s family had more discretionary income than today's.

If middle-class income does not grow as rapidly as middle-class costs, then one option is to further subsidize the rising relative costs of labor-intensive goods and services that are necessary to a middle-class lifestyle, such as education, child care, and health care. And the government will certainly be pressured to provide such subsidies. But taxing fewer and fewer rich people to subsidize more and more middle-class people would increase incentives for the rich to avoid taxation or even to leave the country. An alternative is to increase the number of people who own income-producing assets.

"Universal capitalism," the idea that everyone should own income-producing financial assets, was originally championed by Thomas Paine, in the eighteenth century, and variants of the idea have been proposed in more recent years by Louis Kelso, Mortimer Adler, Jeffrey Gates, and Bruce Ackerman. Today about half of American households, and roughly 70 percent of registered voters, own stock through pension funds and similar vehicles. But money set aside for retirement does no good during one's working life. Proposals for government-funded savings accounts for all children that would be restricted to a few purposes, such as college education or a first-home purchase, have been made by the Washington University professor Michael Sherraden and the former IRS commissioner Fred T. Goldberg Jr. Ray Boshara, of the New America Foundation, has proposed a similar system of American Stakeholder Accounts. And last April, British Prime Minister Tony Blair announced the establishment of child trust funds in the United Kingdom.

Like retirement savings invested in the stock market, child trust funds would be earmarked for particular purposes. But it is possible to imagine a future in which middle-class Americans would receive part of the returns on their investments during their working lives (a small part at first, but more with each generation), which they would be free to save or to spend without any restrictions. Of course, a nation that confiscated private financial wealth and redistributed it among its citizens would wreck its economy and send not only capital but also capitalists fleeing across its borders. Thus any plausible program of universal capitalism must start small, by planting seeds capable of growing along with the economy over time.

For example, one can imagine a means-tested program of private, regulated investment accounts in which the government matched the contributions of low-income workers. The seed money might come from spending cuts elsewhere, or from new taxes. Alternatively, citizens could all begin receiving modest amounts of money from the sale or lease of the airwaves and other public assets. In this way, even though most new middle-class jobs would not contribute to productivity growth in the way that farm and factory labor did in the past, universal capitalism could ensure that the fourth American middle class, like its predecessors, would be able to share directly in the long-term growth of the nation's economy.

This may seem a radical change. But only in recent generations have Americans begun to receive most of their income in the form of wages. The yeoman farmer didn't rely on wages. And only in the twentieth century did the New Deal add the social wage to the market wage. In the course of the twenty-first century what may be called the "capital wage" could be added to these, so that middle-class Americans—not merely an affluent minority—might derive income from three sources rather than just two.

In their own ways, with methods appropriate to their own times, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, Franklin Roosevelt, and their allies provided the institutional frameworks that permitted successive versions of middle-class America to grow and flourish. Their success set a high standard for the leaders of today. Every presidential candidate claims to want to help middle-class Americans. The challenge, though, is not to repair the current American middle class but to create a new one. ▲

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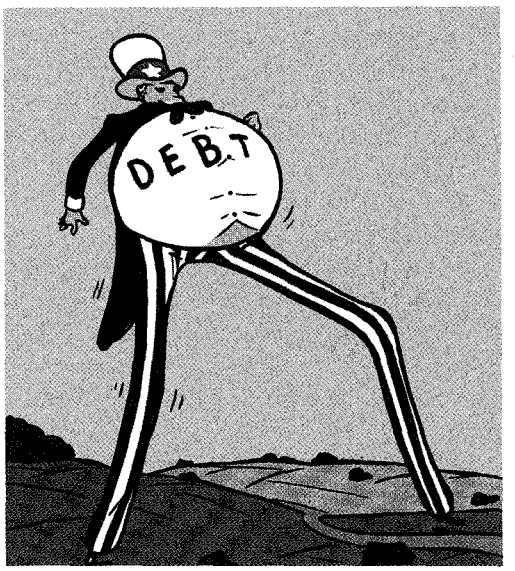
[*The Economy*]

America's "Suez Moment"

The growing trade deficit threatens U.S. living standards and makes the country dangerously vulnerable to economic extortion. The way out is to make foreigners act more like us

BY SHERLE R. SCHWENNINGER

Despite its unchallenged military might, the United States has an Achilles' heel: its economy depends on foreign capital. Though hardly anyone acknowledges this publicly, China and Japan already hold so much American debt that, theoretically, each could exert enormous leverage on American foreign policy. So far, the economic dependence of these countries on American consumers has kept them from exercising such power. But what would happen if, for instance, Washington changed its one-China policy and officially recognized Taiwan? Or if the Bush Administration threatened to invade North Korea? Simply by dumping U.S. Treasury bills and other dollar-denominated assets, China—which holds more federal U.S. debt than any other country—could cause the value of the dollar to plummet, leading to a major crisis for the U.S. economy.



China and Japan wouldn't have to be consciously hostile to wreak havoc; they could create a currency crisis by accident, through either bad policy decisions or instability in their own economies. Both countries have weak banking systems that are burdened by bad loans that will never be repaid. Economists have long warned that the collapse of Japan's banking system could devastate the United States. A Chinese banking crisis could cause equally severe problems.

America is like no other dominant great power in modern history—because it depends on other countries for capital to sustain its military and economic dominance. In comparison, consider the British Empire. At the height of its imperial reign, in 1913, Britain was a net exporter, or investor, of capital; it invested the equivalent of nine percent of its gross domestic product in foreign countries that year, helping to finance the infrastructures of the United States, Canada, Australia, and Argentina. Even long afterward Britain was able to retain a prominent international role in large part because it earned interest and dividends on the enormous investments it had made during its heyday. In contrast, the United States today is a net importer, or borrower, of capital—not only from China and Japan but also from Europe and emerging economies, at a rate of more than $500 billion a year, or approximately five percent of our GDP.

The British Empire eventually declined, of course, and in 1956 it endured the humiliating demise of its great-power status in a clash over the Suez Canal. U.S. policymakers should take note: Britain was brought to its knees not by a military defeat but by an economic one—specifically, America's refusal to support the British pound, which created a monetary crisis for the British government, forcing it to call off its ill-advised campaign with France and Israel to recapture the Suez Canal after nationalization by Egypt. As its international debt grows, the United States becomes ever more vulnerable to its own Suez moment.

OUR "CO-DEPENDENT" ECONOMY

The United States has so far been able to slow its relative global economic decline because of its unique role in the international economic system as the consumer of first and last resort. Other countries have been willing to lend us money (generally by buying U.S. assets and Treasury bills) not because investing in America has been so profitable but because we provide a market for the goods produced by their industrializing economies.

America is the world's only consumption superpower. As such, it deserves a great deal of credit for the recovery of European economies in the 1950s and 1960s, the Asian export miracle of the 1980s and 1990s, and the recent commercial rise of China. American consumers have powered the Keynesian engine that lifted the world economy out of its past three recessions, in 1982–1983, 1991–1992, and 2001–2002. The problem, however, is that with each turn of the global economic cycle, America has gone deeper into debt to the rest of the world. Today we owe almost $3 trillion—close to 30 percent of annual GDP—in international debt.

This problem is largely a result of our propensity to live beyond our means; Americans save too little and consume too much. But it is exacerbated by the behavior of our closest trading partners in Asia and (to a lesser degree) Europe, who are our fiscal mirror opposites: they save too much and consume too little. America and its trading partners are locked in co-dependency. In the short term this co-dependency has actually worked reasonably well: our principal trading partners lend us money to buy their cheaper goods with a strong dollar. In return they have access to a stable market for their products, enabling their economies to grow at an impressive rate.

But for the United States this relationship has significant costs that are only now beginning to be felt. For one

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thing, the availability of cheap foreign goods and services has led to the erosion of America's productive capacity. More important, now that the United States depends as heavily as many developing nations on borrowing from abroad, our standard of living and our dominant position in the world are at risk.

American policymakers have been slow to grasp this, however, because the initial effects of our growing debt burden have been more positive than negative. But eventually our growing international debt will produce more-painful consequences. If foreign investors become reluctant to lend to us, as they will if they foresee that we can't keep up with our mounting obligations, the dollar will fall, driving up interest rates and increasing the cost of living for most Americans. The modest decline in the value of the dollar over the past six months may be a harbinger of much steeper declines to come.

Some "new economy" theorists argue that in today's borderless world economy, the current-account deficit—the broadest measure of our negative balance of payments with the rest of the world—no longer matters, because we can endlessly borrow and attract capital from outside the United States. But current-account deficits and international debt do matter; they represent real claims on U.S. assets by foreign individuals and corporations—claims that will eventually need to be repaid. If China, Japan, and Europe are today subsidizing our national standard of living at a rate of more than five percent of GDP a year, then at some point we will need to subsidize theirs—and we will need to do so by an even larger amount, because of interest on the debt (and dividends on the assets) they own. Moreover, if the dollar declines, we will have to pay other countries more for their goods. This will lead to declining standards of living for most Americans.

The U.S. standard of living may at first seem to have little direct connection to our country's global military standing. But will taxpaying American voters be willing to spend ever larger sums of money to sustain our military position and assume responsibility for nation-building in dangerous parts of the world even as their standard of living is falling? The current debate over the growing price tag of the occupation and reconstruction of Iraq, which cuts across party lines, suggests not.

BUILDING A GLOBAL MIDDLE CLASS

How to escape this predicament? The United States cannot, of course, undo its debtor position overnight. But there are steps that it can take to keep the current-account deficit from getting worse, and to begin to wean our economy from its unhealthy relationship with Asian exporters. Essentially, we must begin to reverse the pattern of overconsumption by Americans and underconsumption by Asians that now characterizes the U.S.-Asian relationship. The first step, if we want to stop accumulating international debt, is to begin producing more than we consume—and to do that we must increase our national levels of saving and investment.

But that in itself could cause a global economic crisis: if American consumers stop buying, the world economy might sputter and collapse. Thus we must also encourage other societies to consume more, particularly more U.S. goods and services. There are inherent limits to how much the aging societies of Europe and Japan will be able to absorb from American producers, so the fastest route to decreasing the current-account deficit while growing the global economy lies in building a middle class of consumers in the emerging economies of Asia, Eastern Europe, and Latin America. The way to do this is to encourage Europe and Japan to invest their surplus savings in countries such as South Korea, China, Taiwan, Brazil, Malaysia, Turkey, and Mexico. Such an influx of investment would allow those emerging economies to both consume more and invest more, helping to produce what might be called middle-class-oriented development.

How would middle-class-oriented development work? The American experience in creating mass affluence in the twentieth century offers a model. The United States grew rich not by exporting its wares to Britain and France but by creating a large domestic market for American-made goods and services. This market was created in part by establishing a system of credit that allowed millions of Americans to get thirty-year mortgages to buy or build their own homes; by establishing a municipal and state bond market that allowed local governments to build new schools and roads and to finance modern electricity and water systems; and by developing loan programs that allowed entrepreneurs to provide needed services to new homeowners and growing businesses. All these activities helped to create millions of jobs for architects, engineers, plumbers, electricians, bricklayers, and others—along with enough demand to encourage ever more investment. Even today homeownership remains one of the cornerstones of American prosperity; and the home-mortgage market is one of the pillars of the U.S. financial system. To promote middle-class development in their emerging economies, therefore, governments should aim not simply at boosting manufactured exports but also at expanding domestic consumption, homeownership, and public infrastructure. They could begin to do so (with the help of the international financial community) by creating the equivalent of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, two quasi-governmental institutions that have helped make homeownership possible for millions of working Americans, and by creating local and state bond markets to finance new roads, schools, and water systems.

Unfortunately, over the past several decades the United States has all but ignored the success of its own middle-class-oriented development in formulating international economic policy, choosing instead to push developing countries to export in a way that has served the interests of neither its middle class nor aspiring middle classes in emerging economies. If the United States is to regain long-term international solvency without provoking a global economic crisis, it will only be by urgently promoting middle-class-oriented development worldwide. ■

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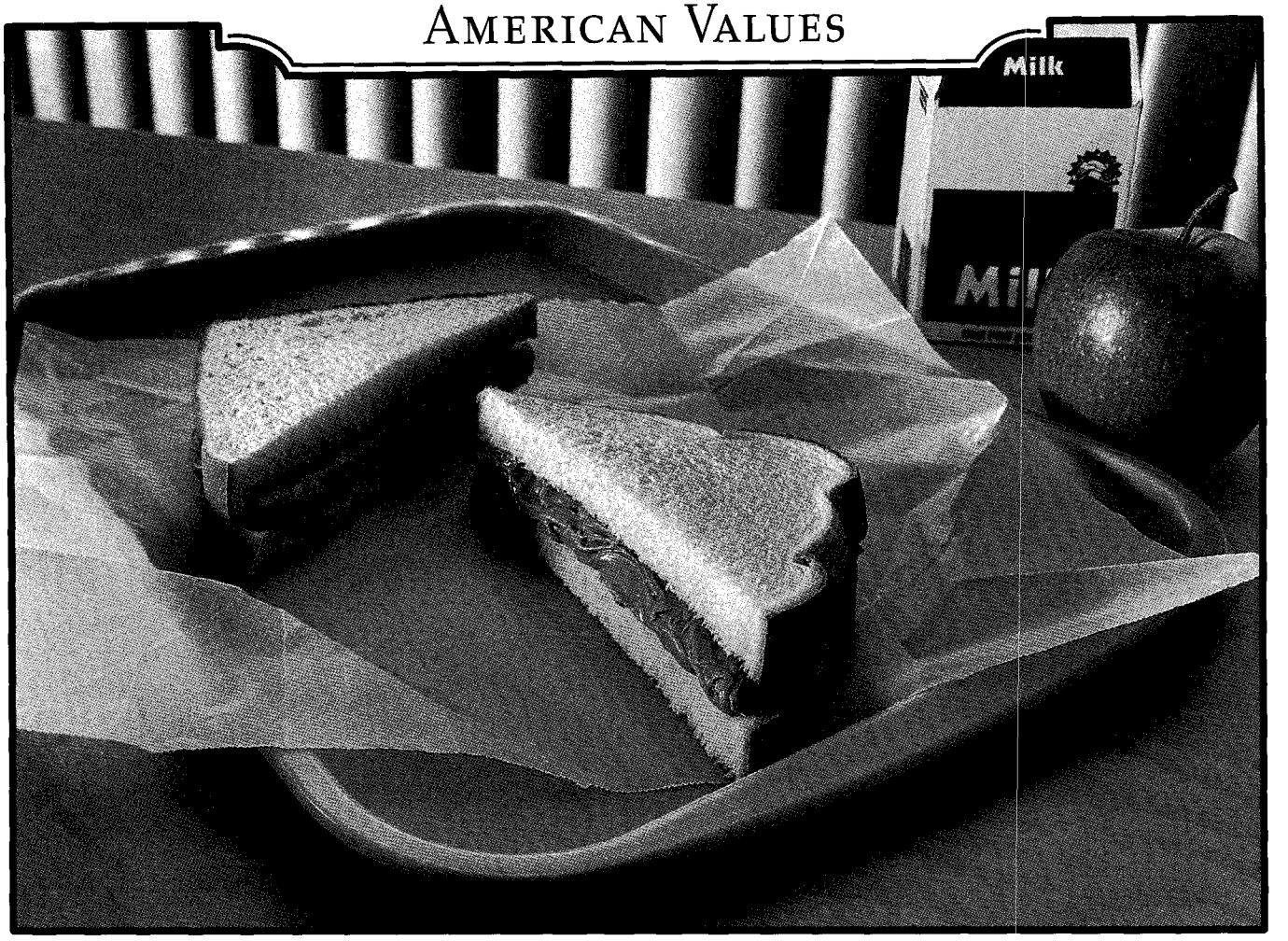
AMERICAN VALUES



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[Part II: *Society*]

The Angry American

Social rage as a measure of the country's moral and political well-being

BY PAUL STAROBIN

Is an angry society an unhealthy one? So we're often told. Feeling angry? Well, then, say those earnest experts who seek to soothe our roiled spirits, calm down. Take a pill. Try yoga. In *The New York Times* the op-ed columnist Nicholas D. Kristof begs us to "hold the vitriol," which, he worries, "discourages public service." And yet where would America be without its anger? Perhaps still under Colonial rule, if those rowdy upstarts had never tossed British tea into Boston Harbor. Perhaps still mired in a slave-based economy, if not for the prodding of yes, vitriolic abolitionists. Okay—I'm exaggerating to underscore a point. But the point is worth considering: the presence of anger can indicate a society's moral and political well-being, and its absence can be a worrisome sign of complacency. Indeed, the democratic idea rests on the proposition that the well-placed anger of the citizenry can be an appropriate and useful instrument of change. Aristotle certainly thought so. "The man who is angry at the right things and with the right people ...," he wrote in Book IV of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, "is praised."

Praise be, America's social-anger thermometer is on the rise. No, the mercury has not reached the level of the 1960s, America's previous Decade of Anger. But there is an appreciable warming of the economic, political, and cultural climate zones. Let's start with a brief definition of terms. By "social anger"—or, let's say, "public anger"—I don't mean incidents of road rage or obscene chants directed by Boston Red Sox bleacher bums at New York Yankees outfielders. My concern is with the anger that is directed at the institutions of political, legal, economic, and cultural power; at the practices and policies that such institutions pursue; and at the people in charge of them. This is, broadly speaking, anti-establishmentarian anger. Ripe targets include the Pentagon, the Republican Party, George Bush, multinational corporations, the California car-tax collector, and the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court judges who in November revoked a state ban on same-sex marriages.

The prospect of gay marriage infuriates religiously motivated conservative traditionalists. Manufacturing workers are angry about jobs lost to a resurgent China. ("A SEETHING POLITICAL ANGER RISES IN AMERICA'S INDUSTRIAL HEARTLAND," the trade publication *Manufacturing & Technology News* recently declared.) Perhaps the most sensitive issue of all is the mounting casualty list

in U.S.-occupied Iraq, which is generating antiwar wrath at the powers that be in Washington. Some of this anger is deeply personal, born of grief; it is acquiring a public, political cast as relatives of U.S. soldiers killed in Iraq speak out in the newspapers and on radio and television. "The President don't care," Vecie Williams, the cousin of Sergeant Aubrey Bell, of Tuskegee, Alabama, who was shot and killed in front of an Iraqi police station, told *The New York Times*. "You see him on TV. He says this, he says that. But show me one tear, one tear."

Ahead of us promises to be an invigorating election season in which the prizes go to those candidates able to tap the anger while managing to avoid becoming its target. Howard Dean, the front-runner for the Democratic nomination, who at any moment looks ready to sink his teeth into the nearest available thigh, is banking his campaign on the "I'm mad as hell" (about Iraq, the economy, Bush, you name it) vote. Other Democrats are certainly doing their best to imitate his snarl. "The angry voter is back," the veteran pollster John Zogby reports. "He and she have been on sabbatical." Zogby says the sabbatical began with the economic boom that started in the mid-1990s, but the boom petered out nearly three years ago, and the discord has been growing ever since. And the terrorism threat seems to have only exacerbated partisan rivalry. The Washington-based Pew Research Center found in a recent survey that "national unity was the initial response to the calamitous events of Sept. 11, 2001, but that spirit has dissolved amid rising political polarization and anger."

Although public anger tends toward cyclical peaks and troughs, its varieties fall into well-established taxonomical grooves. There really aren't any altogether new kinds of anti-establishmentarian anger in America—a country that since its birth has been a congenial breeding ground for this sort of animosity. But even if such anger is a fixed part of America's genetic code, mutations occur as the various strains adapt to a changing political, social, and cultural environment. A catalogue of the forms of social anger in America circa 2003 reflects the nation's evolution as the ultimate middle-class society. It turns out that public anger doesn't dissipate as the average house size (and waistband) expands; it simply fastens onto new targets. Perhaps, as some analysts argue, the anger of an affluent post-industrial society is inevitably rooted more in cultural identity than in economic discontent—but then again, never underestimate the rage of an American who senses a threat to material livelihood. At least three

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forms of anger in the catalogue, updated for the times, are classic breeds.

ECONOMIC-POPULIST ANGER

Traditional American populism was born on the prairie, as struggling nineteenth-century farmers focused their ire on the large, alien, impersonal forces of a rapidly industrializing economy—namely, the extortionist freight-hauling railroads and Wall Street banks to which the farmers were hostage. Today's prototypical angry worker is the laid-off factory worker; since March of 1998 the U.S. manufacturing sector has shed 3.1 million jobs. The blue-collar manufacturing sector endured a similar downsizing in the early 1980s, but now there is a growing white-collar component to the trend, with Boeing, Microsoft, and IBM all "outsourcing" software-programming and engineering jobs to lower-wage havens like India and Russia. In an Internet society it is possible to contract abroad for almost any work that deals principally in digitized data, such as insurance claims. The future of populist anger may thus lie in Redmond, Washington, and Hartford, Connecticut. Born of economic fear and insecurity, this anger has an eternal future in a dynamic capitalist society in which "structural change" is inescapable.

In the here and now, though, the anger is concentrated in places like Rockford, Illinois, a once thriving center of machine-tool industry about an hour's drive from Chicago. The Rockford area has lost 10,000 jobs in the past three years—at Motorola, Textron, and other companies—and many of those laid-off workers who have found new employment are generally working for lower wages, without health and other benefits. "We're on our way to becoming a Third World nation," says Donald Manzullo, a Republican member of Congress who was born in Rockford in 1944 and has represented the district since 1993. Manzullo is a lawyer; his father was a machinist. Although he counts himself a free-trader, he blames China, as do many others in his district, for keeping its currency artificially undervalued, thus boosting exports. What's the state of mind of his constituents? "They are angry because they lost their jobs," he says, "angry because the jobs are going overseas, and angry because the Chinese work for such a low wage." The anger is starting to turn inward, into depression: "A lot of people have given up hope."

Although the pain from which populist anger springs is certainly real, the anger itself tends to be misplaced. Rapacious railroads damaged but did not destroy the yeoman farmer; he fell prey to mechanization, which raised the productivity of American agriculture so much that many fewer workers were needed to produce the same quantity of, say, corn. Similarly, the main reason today's manufacturing workers occupy a shrinking share of the work force is that automation has vastly improved productivity in factories—a trend also inexorably in motion in Japan and Europe.

Still, populist anger tends to serve a useful social purpose. Agrarian populism generated political momentum for the trust-busting and other good-government reforms of the Progressive era. Angry U.S. manufacturing workers are helping to stimulate an overdue debate on the sweatshop conditions in which many products are made in China and elsewhere—a debate that has already prompted Nike and other multinationals to upgrade their overseas labor standards, and that may yield a more balanced trade policy (if not one that restores the industrial vitality of Rockford). And if health-care benefits ever become "portable" (that is, migrate with workers wherever they go), the populist anger of permanently anxious workers forced to change jobs half a dozen times during their careers probably will have been responsible.

LIBERAL ANGER

In the beginning, the Angry American Liberal was a Christian human-rights zealot embarked on a crusade ordained by a wrathful God against the original sin of the new republic: slavery. Harriet Beecher Stowe, the daughter of an evangelical Protestant preacher, helped to support her family by writing for religious periodicals. She shook the country with her first novel, the anti-slavery tract *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), but her writing, suffused with a Christian sentimentality, has scant appeal for the modern liberal. Outside the African-American community, whose religious leaders continue to embrace a liberal politics of righteous indignation rooted in the Bible, the voices of modern liberalism are almost entirely secular. The creeping secularization of liberal anger, which brings the values of the white American liberal into rough alignment with those of Northern Europe's mainstream political culture, stands as political anger's most impressive adaptation in the past century. Indeed, religious fervor is a central animus for this liberal, who associates it with intolerance and inexplicable (to the modern liberal mind) conservative obsessions such as abortion and school prayer.

Perhaps not since the 1960s has liberal anger been so intense. Its grievances have blended into a potent brew: first the 2000 election, which liberals believe George Bush stole; then the inattention to environmental concerns, as symbolized by the Bush Administration's abandonment of the Kyoto Protocol; and now the Iraq War, which liberals widely view as manufactured by the Bush team to benefit nefarious crony interests, including the oil-services company Halliburton, Vice President Dick Cheney's former employer. The Republican Party itself is seen as a font of evil.

To take a sounding of this anger I spoke with one of modern American liberalism's most articulate—and imposing—representatives: the novelist Jane Smiley, who stands over six feet tall and regularly dispatches angry letters on politics to *The New York Times* and other news organizations. Smiley's novels have not so far tackled explicitly political themes, but the writer offered a modern commentary on patriarchal rage in *A Thousand Acres*, which loosely uses the plot of *King Lear* for a story about a midwestern father's tempestuous dealings with his three daughters. "I woke up early this morning, and I lay awake anxious and angry about political matters," Smiley told me in a telephone chat from her home in Carmel Valley, California, on a Thursday in early November, the day after she learned that the Republicans had won gubernatorial elections in Kentucky and Mississippi.

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"I see people who are Republicans as people who have aligned themselves with the worst features of the American character. I call them the gruesome threesome: toxic patriotism, toxic religion, and toxic racism." Smiley conceded that her anger is in some sense problematic; it's disturbing her sleep, for one thing, and it disagrees, she said, with the liberal's temperamental preference for placid tolerance. But on the whole, she said, "I don't actually mind being angry. I don't think liberals mind. I think it's a good thing."

This current wave of anger has been a long time coming, with liberals finally responding in kind to the generation of smash-mouth conservatives who have been assaulting them since the Reagan era. Before there was Howard Dean there was Al Franken, the former *Saturday Night Live* writer and performer who in 1996 published his mold-making *Rush Limbaugh Is a Big Fat Idiot and Other Observations*. That book, Franken told me recently, grew out of his anger at the Gingrich revolution of 1994, for which he saw Limbaugh as "the mouthpiece." Franken's current anti-Bush, anti-Republican best seller, *Lies and the Lying Liars Who Tell Them*, prepared with research assistance from students at Harvard (where Franken was a fellow at the Kennedy School of Government's Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy), is relatively low on humor and in the vein of a political-activist tract. It is a favorite among Dean's well-read supporters, who are disproportionately drawn from the wealthiest, best-educated wing of the Democratic Party.

The bane of modern liberal anger is its tendency to closet itself in elite, marginal causes, such as those espoused by the various societies opposed to anyone's wearing fur. But liberal anger at its best is drawn from the deepest and purest source of all: love. No one has ever expressed this anger better than Charles Dickens. With his scathing indictments of the numerous institutional injustices of Victorian Britain—from debtors' prisons to dreadful factories dependent on child labor—he moved a society toward its better self, and toward reform. In America a kind of Dickensian anger appeared in the civil-rights movement of the 1960s, which laid bare the injustices of institutionalized racism. The last sermon that Martin Luther King Jr. wrote (he was murdered before he could deliver it) was titled "Why America May Go to Hell." But King's central vision was of a new Promised Land, which could be reached only through a redemptive journey paid for in the coin of love. Today's wrathful liberals are unlikely to broaden their appeal unless they can transcend their penchant for satire and sarcasm—which are indirect ways, after all, of taking a poke at a target. Michael Moore's best seller *Dude, Where's My Country?* doesn't quite cut it.

TRADITIONAL-VALUES ANGER

Just how long can social conservatives stay angry? Conservative anger at such venerable targets as Harvard, Hollywood, and the TV networks began well before the ascent of Rush Limbaugh, in the mid-1980s—its roots are in the Goldwater and Nixon campaigns of the 1960s and even before that, in young-Republican activism on college campuses. In an earlier era, when Darwinism was a fresher concept, conservative Bible Belt anger welled up at the teaching of evolution in the public schools.

Conservative anger persists because core elements of the conservative world view—which is grounded in an abiding religious belief—are in fact under steady assault (and have been ridiculed since at least H. L. Mencken, with his barbs at Bible Belters). The conservative bid (led by southern Democrats) to thwart racial integration was lost decades ago, so thoroughly lost that Mississippi Senator Trent Lott and other old-style conservatives are nowadays embarrassed to be reminded that so many in their ranks supported the struggle to maintain segregation. The effort to limit abortion achieves an occasional success (such as the recently enacted restriction on so-called partial-birth abortion), but the overall trend is altogether in favor of the liberal feminist vision enunciated by Betty Friedan & Co. in the 1960s. Conservative attempts to keep smut from invading the household faltered with the coming of the Internet, a pure-gold pipeline for the pornography industry.

And in a society as culturally fluid as America's there will always be new causes for anger on the right. These days gay rights seem to be taking the place once occupied by racial integration as a focus for conservative rage, with the anger meter rising especially rapidly on the volatile issue of gay marriage. One stalwart opponent of gay marriage, Sandy Rios, the president of Concerned Women for America, a Washington-based group whose motto calls for "prayer and action," says she possesses "a righteous anger" that "comes from serious followers of Jesus." A divorced fifty-four-year-old mother of two who grew up in southern Illinois, Rios says that she herself has seen how the permissive values of the 1960s have broken up families and damaged children. Why such strong sentiments on gay marriage in particular? Because traditional marriage, between a man and a woman, is like "the support beam in a big house," she says. "If you take the support beam out, the structure will fail."

At its worst conservative anger detracts from well-being not only by embracing stereotyped and in some cases hateful images of certain groups of people but also by drawing from the tainted well of nostalgia. The well is tainted because the nostalgia is usually for a society remembered or imagined as much better than it ever actually was. Nostalgia can make for poignant art, but it tends to produce a perverse and impractical politics. In 1930 a group of southern writers at Vanderbilt University, including John Crowe Ransom and other "fugitive poets," railed against a faster-paced modern life in their deservedly discarded political manifesto *I'll Take My Stand*, which offered the South "in its very backwardness" as a pathway to "the reconstruction of America."

But at its best conservative anger has forced a rigorous, Old Testament–like moral accounting on issues incautiously advanced by modern liberal secularists. America, which does sometimes seem close to motoring full throttle over a secular cliff, is richer for the debate that angry and uncompromising social conservatives have forced on abortion and euthanasia. As inflamed as the question

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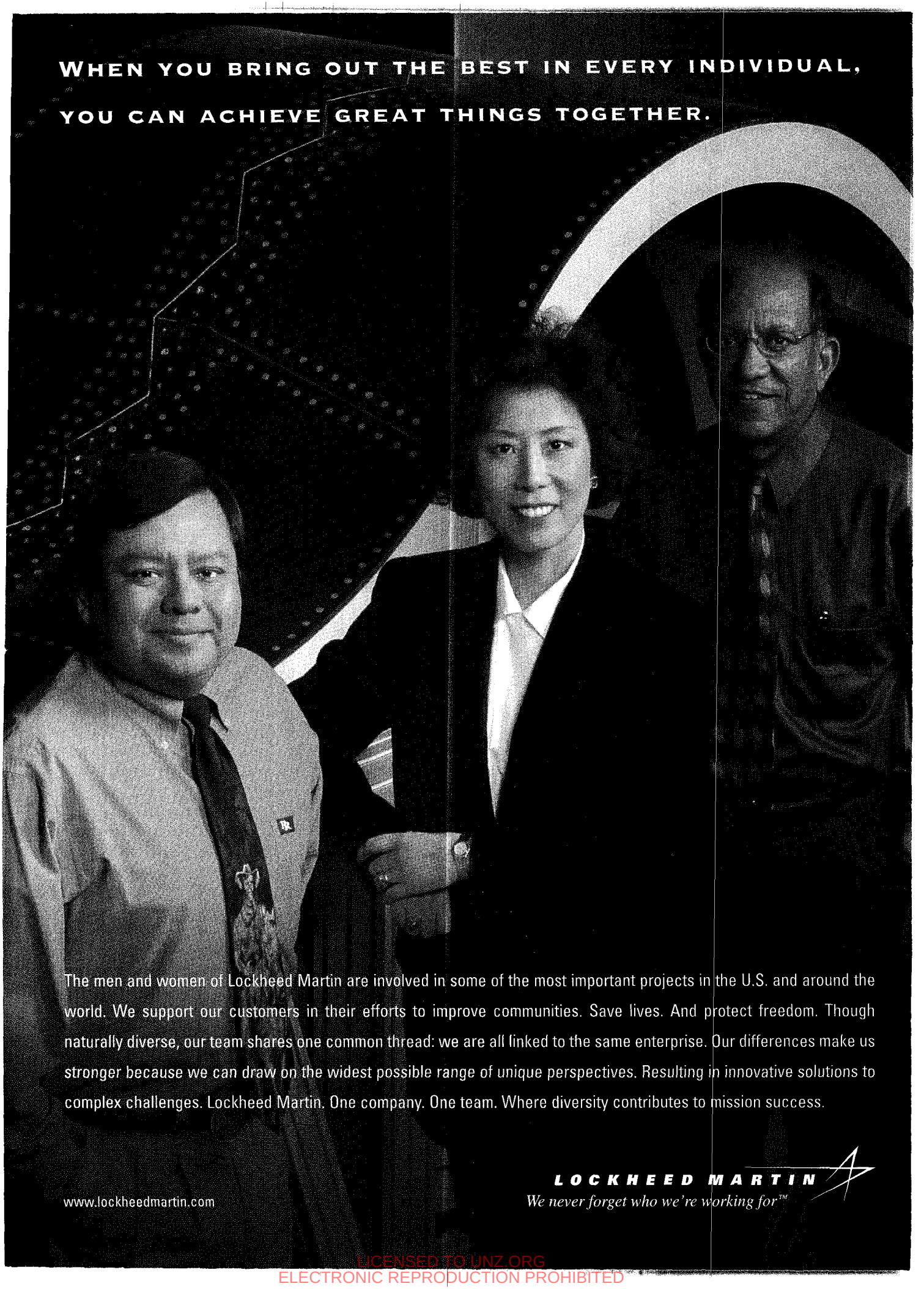

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of gay marriage is likely to become, committed conservatives will force lawmakers, courts, and the large number of citizens who are unsure of their stance to do some hard thinking about the legal and moral meanings of marriage and its larger significance for the social health of America. We're probably going to get where the liberal secularists want to take us, but at a more measured, more deliberate pace.

Is social anger really, on balance, a public good? Certain variants seem entirely devoid of merit. Cynicism—at least one part the anger of the disillusioned spirit—is generally corrosive, although a populace that errs on the side of suspiciousness toward its leaders is not altogether a bad thing. (Better a cynical than a credulous nation.) Then there's a loathing of our nation's leaders, which is often linked to a sense of betrayal. A violent, visceral hatred has at times exacted the steepest of prices: the assassination of Abraham Lincoln came during a campaign of unremitting vilification, in which haters portrayed the President as a traitor to his race and drew caricatures of him as a Negro and an ape. In the 1990s a wave of presidential loathing resulted in the character assassination of Bill Clinton, who was hated with a particular intensity by fellow southerners who viewed his liberalism and his embrace of selected aspects of 1960s counterculture (even if he never inhaled) as a threat to their region's native conservatism. Clinton of course provoked them with his behavioral lapses and subsequent lies—but the loathing was out of proportion to the offenses. And now George Bush, who strikes a fair number of people as a genial guy, is the target of loathing on the left, with the haters gleefully confessing to an obsessive animosity. ("I hate George W. Bush," Jonathan Chait wrote at the outset of his September 29 *New Republic* cover story, "Mad About You.") Loathing tends to focus on the minutely personal as emblematic of the political; in Bush's case, his strut seems to be a particularly infuriating trait, a signifier of the cockiness and arrogance the loathers see in his stance on Iraq and other matters. "He's a smug bastard—you can tell by the way he walks," said Peter Nelson, a thirty-five-year-old massage therapist who showed up at Faneuil Hall, in Boston, to cheer on Howard Dean at a debate there on November 4. (To demonstrate, Nelson puffed out his chest and swung his arms wide, mimicking a cowboy saunter.) It may be that loathing of the President is an unavoidable by-product of the pursuit of bold change. Few Presidents have faced more vitriol than Franklin Delano Roosevelt, whom fellow patricians considered a betrayer of his class for his embrace of the New Deal. It's hard to remember much loathing of the mild Calvin Coolidge.

- **SOCIAL ANGER REFLECTS THE NATION'S EVOLUTION AS THE ULTIMATE MIDDLE-CLASS SOCIETY.**
- **RISING PARTISANSHIP IS A POSITIVE DEVELOPMENT. INCREASES IN PARTISANSHIP COINCIDE WITH DECREASES IN CYNICISM.**
- **THE MOST SUCCESSFUL POLITICAL CANDIDATES WILL BE THOSE WHO CAN TAP AMERICAN ANGER WITHOUT BECOMING ITS TARGET.**

True, social anger in America today too often betrays the impatience and ingratitude of a spoiled-brat society. In almost every corner of the planet live people who would sacrifice a good deal to trade their list of daily public angers for that of the average American. Has the good life ever been lived better than in California, which despite its laid-back image has for many years been a pacesetter for the anger agenda? California's per capita income—$32,702—puts it well ahead of the United Kingdom, Germany, and France. Yet Californians were so angered by a proposed tripling of the state's car tax that they recalled Governor Gray Davis and replaced him with Arnold Schwarzenegger, the former bodybuilder best known for his movie role as the Terminator. As for the despised levy, it meant that the owner of a 2003 4x4 Chevrolet Suburban, retailing at $40,665, would have to pay a tax of $813.30 rather than $264.32. Small change, one might think, for the sort of consumer quite willing to add on such features as heated leather seats, an XM satellite radio system, and a DVD player for the kids. But flashpan anger in response to even slight threats to material well-being ultimately reflects the country's distinctive determination—sanctioned in its founding charter—to pursue happiness. (The Terminator's first official act as governor, needless to say, was to roll back the car tax.)

Of course, more might be accomplished if Americans could somehow manage to become as united in their anger as Californians seem to have been on the car tax. The clash between angry secular liberals and angry religiously motivated conservatives sometimes seems to generate little more than media din. But the rising partisanship of the American voter is probably a positive development. A country as big and diverse as the United States cannot avoid contentious fights over public-policy issues. A broad sorting of voters into a Red team and a Blue team—a trend harking back to the intense partisanship of the nineteenth century—is better than a European-style fragmentation of the electorate into numerous small parties, able to govern only after patching together fragile coalitions. The same Pew Research Center survey that found—tut-tut—a surge in the intensity of partisan feelings also turned up a decline in cynicism about government.

That makes sense. The Pragmatic American wouldn't be investing energies—and angers—in partisan causes if he or she didn't believe in the decent possibility of a payoff. America works as well as it does because of the practical use it makes of its anger. Now the country is getting angry again. Perhaps it is not angry enough.

Paul Starobin is a contributing editor of The Atlantic *and a staff correspondent for* National Journal. *He recently completed a four-year stint as the Moscow bureau chief for* BusinessWeek.

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[*Society*]

The Other Gender Gap

Maybe boys just weren't meant for the classroom

BY MARSHALL POE

The women's movement has taught us many things, one of the more surprising being that boys are not performing in school as well as they might.

Three decades ago reformers' attention was focused on the "higher-education gap"—the fact that not as many girls went on to college, graduate school, and professional school as boys. Advocates of equality between the sexes fought hard to create gender-specific education programs, fair admissions policies, and professional societies for women. Their efforts were rewarded: from 1970 to 2000 the number of women attending college rose by 136 percent, graduate school by 168 percent, and professional school by 853 percent.

Yet soon the higher-education gap opened again—but this time girls were on the other side of it. In the late 1970s more girls than boys began to enroll in college, and the disparity has since increased. Today women make up approximately 56 percent of all undergraduates, outnumbering men by about 1.7 million. In addition, about 300,000 more women than men enter graduate school each year. (The gap does not particularly affect professional school; almost as many women as men attend.) In short, equal opportunity brought an unequal result.

The advance of girls relative to boys might well have been predicted from patterns in K–12 schooling, where girls have long been outperforming boys on several measures. In both primary and secondary school girls tend to receive higher marks than boys. Since the inception, in 1969, of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (a standardized exam given to nine-, thirteen-, and seventeen-year-olds), girls at all grade levels have scored much higher, on average, than boys in language skills, and about the same in math. (True, college-bound boys have long outperformed girls overall on the SAT, but it is likely that boys' average scores are statistically elevated by the fact that roughly 10 percent fewer of them take the exam—and those who opt out tend to be lower achievers.) It is hardly surprising, then, that once various cultural barriers were removed, girls began entering college at a greater rate.

The continuing advance among girls has thrown a spotlight on the stagnation of boys. During the past decade the percentage of boys who complete high school (about 70), enter college (about 40), and go on to graduate

school (about eight) has risen only slightly or not at all. And this despite the fact that the economic payoff of higher education has never been greater. Whereas girls continue to demonstrate that society has not yet reached any "natural" limit on college-attendance rates, boys have somehow gotten stuck. If boys and girls have roughly equal abilities, then why aren't they doing equally well?

From kindergarten on, the education system rewards self-control, obedience, and concentration—qualities that, any teacher can tell you, are much more common among girls than boys, particularly at young ages. Boys fidget, fool around, fight, and worse. Thirty years ago teachers may have accommodated and managed this behavior, in part by devoting more attention to boys than to girls. But as girls have come to attract equal attention, as an inability to sit still has been medicalized, and as the options for curbing student misbehavior have been ever more curtailed, boys may have suffered. Boys make up three quarters of all children categorized as learning disabled today, and they are put in special education at a much higher rate (special education is often misused as a place to stick "problem kids," and children seldom switch from there to the college track). Shorter recess times, less physical education, and more time spent on rote learning (in order to meet testing standards) may have exacerbated the problems that boys tend to experience in the classroom. It is no wonder, then, that many boys disengage academically. Boys are also subject to a range of extrinsic factors that hinder their academic performance and pull them out of school at greater rates than girls. First among these is the labor market. Young men, with or without high school diplomas, earn more than young women, so they are more likely to see work as an *alternative* to school. Employment gives many men immediate monetary gratification along with relief from the drudgery of the classroom.

But boys' educational stagnation has long-term economic implications. Not even half the boys in the country are taking advantage of the opportunity to go to college, which has become almost a prerequisite for a middle-class lifestyle. And languishing academic attainment among a large portion of our population spells trouble for the prospects of continued economic growth. Unless more boys begin attending college, the nation may face a shortage of highly skilled workers in the coming decades.

The trouble with boys is not confined to the United States; boys are being outperformed by girls throughout the developed world. The United Kingdom and Australia are currently testing programs aimed at making education more boy-friendly. Single-sex schools, single-sex classes, and gender-specific curricula are all being tried. Here the United States lags: there are several local initiatives aimed at boys, but nothing on the national level—perhaps owing to a residual anxiety over the idea of helping boys in a society where men for so long enjoyed special advantages.

Marshall Poe is an Atlantic *staff researcher.*

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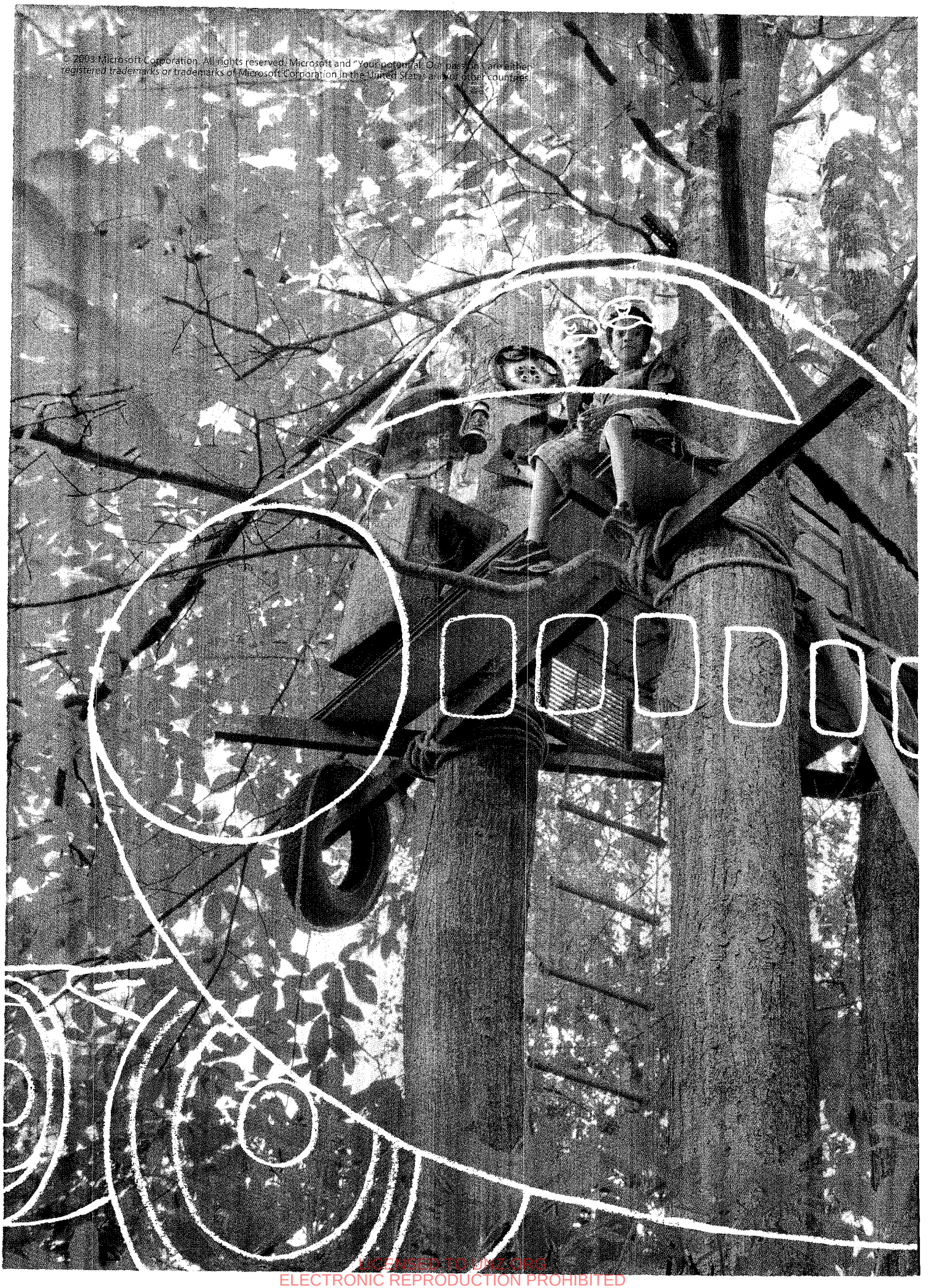

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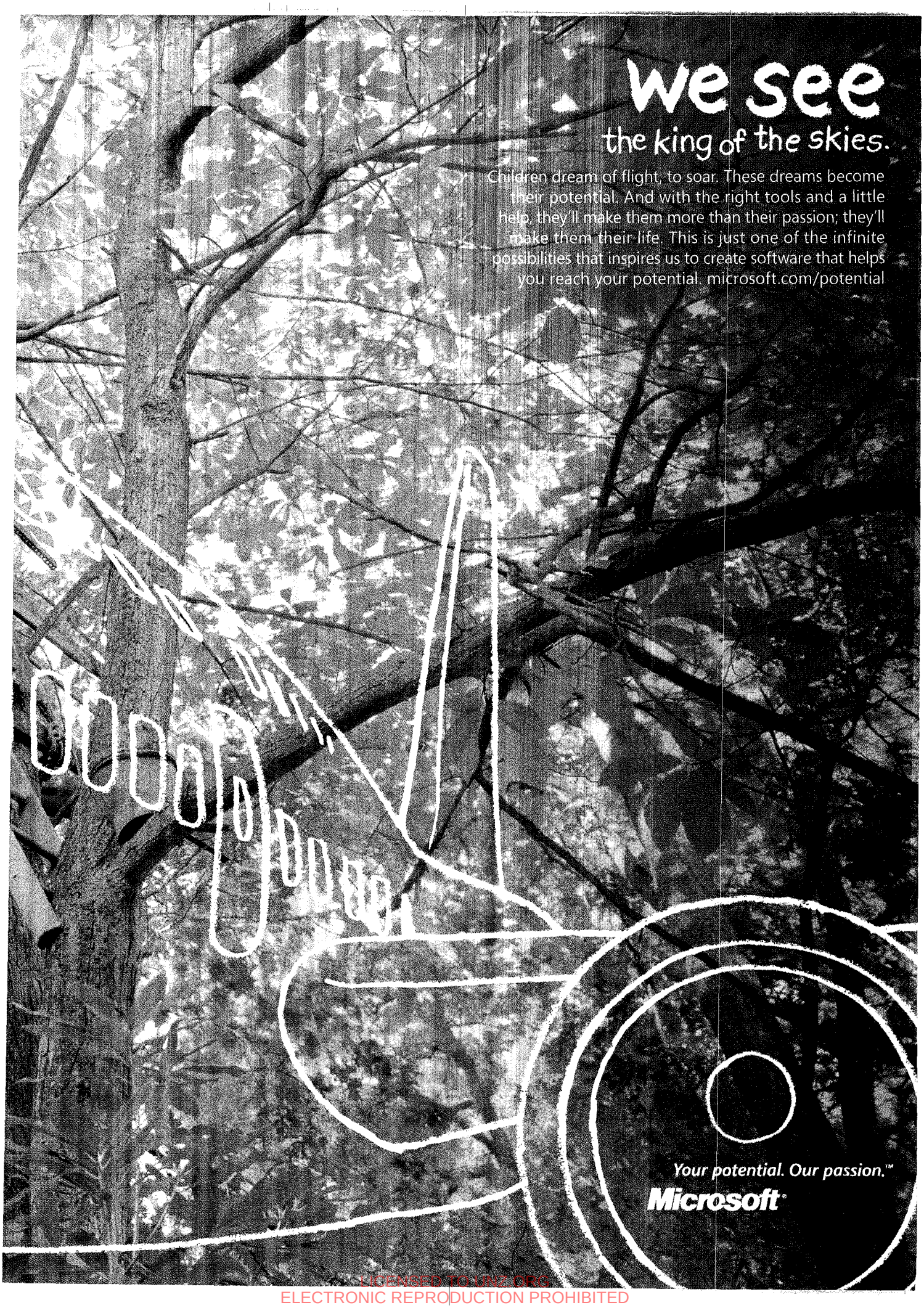

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[*Society*]

The Tuition Crunch

For low-income students college is increasingly out of reach

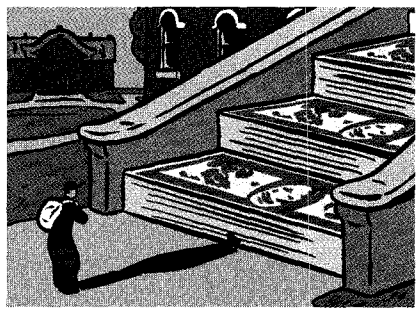
BY JENNIFER WASHBURN

A four-year college degree has become all but a necessity for getting ahead in the information age. Since the 1980s the average real income of workers with only a high school diploma has fallen, while salaries among those with at least a college degree have risen: they now earn 75 percent more than high school graduates. At the national level, having a highly educated work force is critical in order to sustain our technological edge in the global economy.

America's higher-education system ranks among its greatest achievements. But in the past two decades our commitment to equal opportunity in post-secondary education has deteriorated markedly. In 1979 students from the richest 25 percent of American homes were four times as likely to attend college as those from the poorest 25 percent; by 1994 they were ten times as likely.

Part of the problem is the skyrocketing cost of college. Since 1980 tuition and related charges have increased at more than twice the rate of inflation, rising by nearly 40 percent in real terms in the past decade alone. Public attention has focused largely on the $35,000-plus annual cost of elite schools like Harvard and Brown. The bigger problem rests with the public colleges and universities that serve 80 percent of the nation's students. In 2003 the University of Arizona's average annual tuition rose by 39 percent, to $3,604, and Iowa State's rose by 22 percent, to $5,028. For many low-income families increases like these are difficult to absorb. Indeed, the cost for such families of sending a child to a four-year public institution shot from 13 percent of family income in 1980 to 25 percent in 2000 (for middle- and high-income families the percentage barely increased).

Congressional Republicans, led by Representative Howard McKeon, of California, contend that universities are largely to blame for these tuition hikes.



However, most experts agree that fluctuations in state spending are the principal cause of tuition increases at public institutions, which depend heavily on appropriations to subsidize their operations. As Arthur Hauptman, an expert on college financing, explains, in each of the past three economic recessions—in the mid-1970s, the early 1980s, and the early 1990s—state higher-education spending per student declined, forcing students and their families to shoulder more of the cost in the form of double-digit percentage hikes in tuition. Increases during the recent recession reflect the same pattern.

The tuition spiral is not the only impediment to equality of opportunity. More significant perhaps is the nation's backsliding on need-based financial aid. In 1975–1976 the maximum federal Pell Grant award (for low-income students) covered 84 percent of the cost of attendance at a public four-year college; by 1999–2000 it covered only 39 percent. This is part of a broader shift to a system dominated by loans, which has left a generation of students struggling to finance heavy debt.

Hardest hit are low-income students, whose numbers are expected to increase dramatically over the next decade. From 1989 to 1999 the average cumulative debt of the poorest 25 percent of public-college seniors grew from $7,629 to $12,888 (in constant 1999 dollars). Studies find that when financial-aid packages inadequately cover expenses, students work long hours, attend school part time, and opt for two-year as opposed to four-year programs—all of which reduce their chances of acquiring a bachelor's degree.

Federal efforts during the past decade or so to address rising tuition have done little to help low-income families. Both the Clinton and the George W. Bush Administrations promoted tax breaks and saving incentives encouraging families to set aside money for college. These programs largely benefited middle- and upper-income families, who have both taxable income and resources to save. With the Higher Education Act up for renewal this year, Congress should focus on aiding those students unlikely to complete—or attend—college without greater financial support, and should encourage universities to do the same. To begin with, it should restore the purchasing power of Pell Grants by raising the maximum award from the current $4,050 to $8,000. Many will argue that the cost—roughly $15 billion in additional annual spending—is unrealistic. Historically, however, our nation's investments in expanding access to higher education have paid off many times over. And the money required, according to a new Century Foundation publication, is roughly equivalent to the annual revenue lost to the Treasury from tax and savings benefits that currently help those higher on the income ladder. To relieve the extraordinary debt burden that many students face, Congress should also put the college-loan system under federal administration, and let every student consolidate loans and pay them off on an income-contingent basis, as one federal loan program already allows.

Broadening access to higher education has never been the answer to inequality, but it *is* the way to ensure that every young person has a chance to move upward in society. Either we can continue to ignore the persistent disparities in post-secondary training and rely increasingly on foreign students to fill our graduate-level science and engineering programs, or we can renew our commitment to educating the young people who are already here.

Jennifer Washburn is a fellow at the New America Foundation. She is writing a book about the commercialization of higher education.

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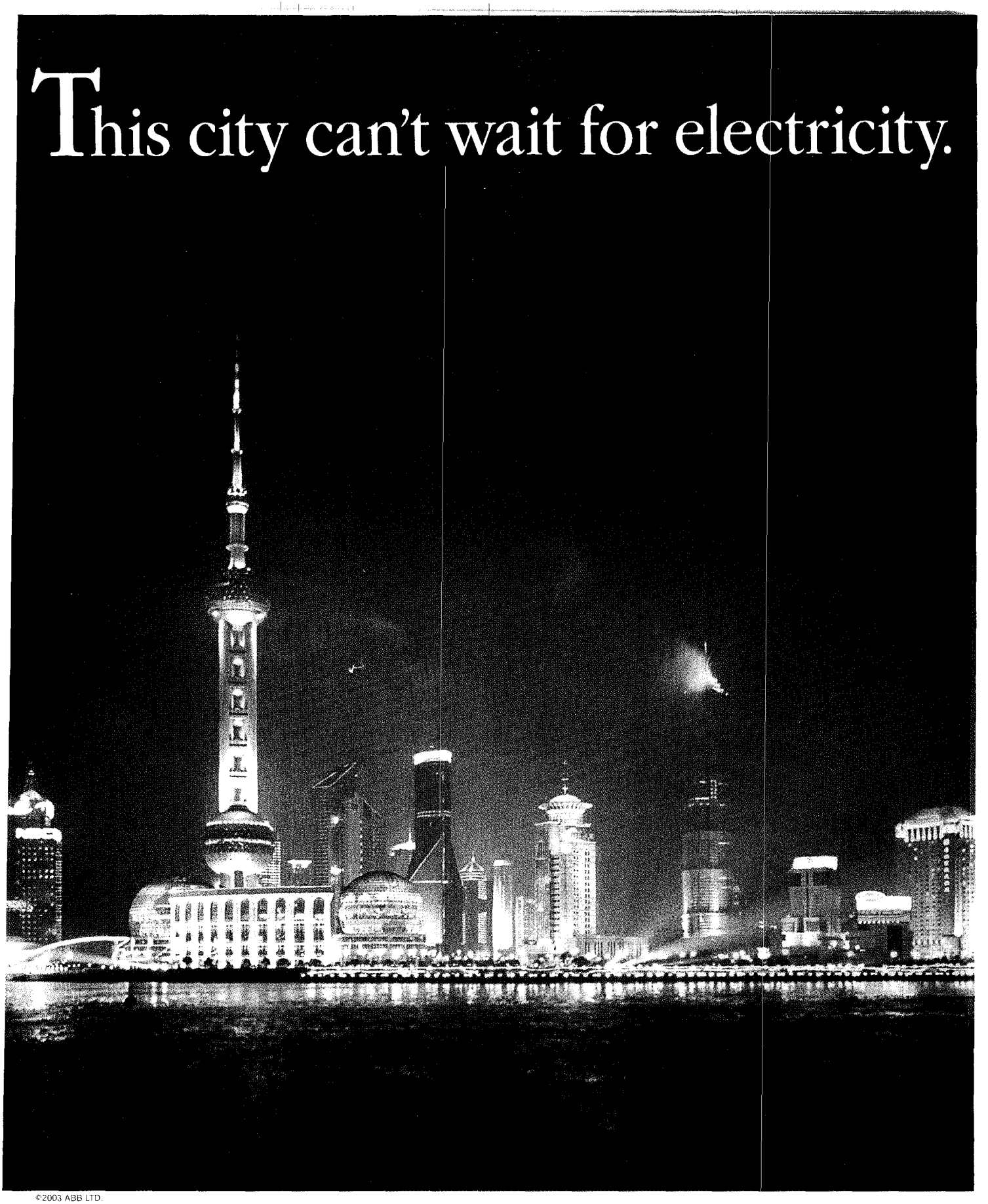

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[*Society*]

Putting a Value on Health

The way to arrest spiraling costs is to admit that we already do what we say we never will—ration health care—and then figure out how to do that better

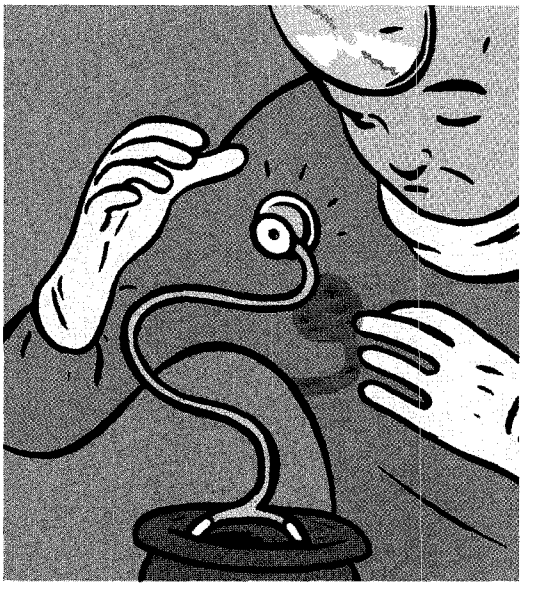
BY DON PECK

For all its flaws, medical care in the United States has improved enormously over the past several decades. Deaths from heart disease have fallen by 40 percent since 1970. In the mid-1980s HIV was an automatic death sentence; it's not anymore. Since 1990, thanks to better detection and treatment, cancer mortality rates have been falling. (Breast-cancer mortality is down by 20 percent since 1990.) Altogether, medical advances have helped to raise U.S. life expectancy from an average of sixty-eight years in 1950 to seventy-seven years today.

Not only have American lives grown longer, but their quality has improved. The proportion of people over sixty-five with one or more chronic disabilities—such as the inability to walk, or to get dressed, without aid—declined from greater than 25 percent in 1982 to less than 20 percent in 1999. And the development of Viagra and vision-correction surgery, among many other drugs and procedures, has allowed many Americans to prolong pleasures historically associated with youth.

Of course, not all the recent improvements in American health and longevity can be directly attributed to our health-care system; some are as much the result of adopting healthier habits (exercise, better diet) or of dropping unhealthy ones (smoking, excessive alcohol consumption). And even though life expectancy has been rising in America, it remains lower than in many other advanced nations—probably because those nations have lower rates of obesity, broader access to health care, and lesser degrees of wealth inequality. Still, better medical care is the principal cause of improvements in American health and life-span over the past fifty years.

The problem, of course, is that since 1960 health-care spending has grown significantly faster than the economy, meaning that we're spending an ever larger portion of our incomes on medical care. In 1960 health care constituted 5.1 percent of the U.S. economy; in 1980 it constituted 8.8 percent; today it constitutes 13.3 percent. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMMS) projects that health-care spending will grow by an average of more than seven percent a year until 2012, even after adjusting for inflation. Meanwhile, private health-insurance premiums—which rose by 14 percent last year alone—are becoming unaffordable for ever more Americans.



It seems that cutting costs should be relatively easy. After all, health-care delivery in the United States is notoriously inefficient. Consumers lack sufficient information or expertise to make informed choices of physicians, hospitals, and treatments. Also, because most of their health care is paid for by insurance, they tend to overuse the system. Physicians, for their part, usually profit from the tests and procedures they order and perform—whether or not those tests and procedures are truly necessary. Shouldn't it be a simple matter to reduce waste and abuse?

Up to a point, yes. The frequency of a major surgical procedure such as coronary bypass surgery varies widely from physician to physician and region to region, with no discernible difference in health outcomes, on average, between patients who receive such treatments and those who don't. According to one study, 20 to 30 percent of health-care spending goes for tests, treatments, and visits that have no positive effect on either the quality or the length of our lives. If we could identify and prevent even half this spending, we would save some $25 billion to $35 billion each year on Medicare alone.

But this would do little to address the fundamental problem. That's because the largest driver of growth in health-care spending is not waste or price gouging or the slow aging of the population but, rather, the cost of technological innovation. Even when technological improvements make some treatments less expensive and more effective, overall spending often rises. Cataract surgery, for example, used to require up to a week in the hospital and offer only uncertain results. Now it's a quick, highly effective outpatient surgery. Per-procedure costs of this surgery have fallen, on average, by about one percent a year over the long term, after controlling for inflation. But because so many more people opt for cataract surgery today, real total spending on the procedure has risen by four percent a year over the same period. Given the overall growth in health-care spending currently projected by the CMMS, even an immediate drop, through waste reduction, of 20 percent in nationwide spending—which would be highly difficult to achieve—would be undone by new technology-fueled spending in just four years.

Most of the growth in health-care spending has produced real improvements in the scope of medical services and the quality of care. But the number

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of things we can do to cure disease, eliminate discomfort, and stave off aging is expanding faster than the ability of many Americans to pay for them. Indeed, it appears very likely that growth in medical spending will continue to outpace growth in personal income or GDP over the next few decades—even if we introduce temporary cost-saving measures.

That we spend enormous sums of money for even tiny improvements in health-care quality reflects a social ethos to which most Americans implicitly subscribe: anything that might improve health or extend life, however marginally, should be made available to everyone, at whatever cost. That may seem morally proper. But because of the way that health care is bought and financed in this country, we tend to be blind to the costs, both economic and moral, of taking this ethos too far. Because neither patients nor physicians pay for them directly, expensive tests, treatments, and procedures of only marginal value are routinely ordered, and expensive new technologies that barely improve the ability to detect or treat a disease are widely and rapidly adopted. Of course, not every health plan covers every test or treatment, but most health-insurance plans have been rapidly expanding what they cover. The result is a system in which patients with insurance can order up an expensive test that is one percent more effective than a test costing one third as much—indirectly pushing health-care premiums beyond the reach of many others.

■ THE NUMBER OF THINGS WE CAN DO TO PRESERVE HEALTH IS EXPANDING FASTER THAN THE ABILITY OF AMERICANS TO PAY FOR THEM.

■ A KEY FACTOR MISSING FROM REFORM EFFORTS IS RELIABLE INFORMATION ABOUT WHAT MEDICAL TREATMENTS WORK.

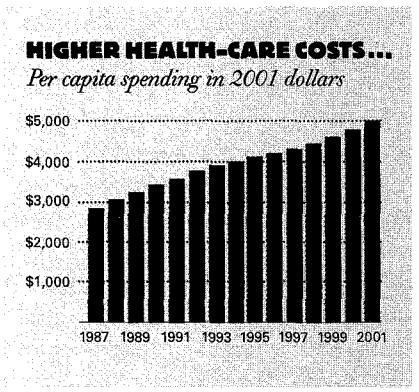
■ THE SIMPLEST WAY TO ACHIEVE UNIVERSAL HEALTH INSURANCE IS TO REQUIRE AMERICANS TO BUY IT.

Is there anything we can do about this? Unfortunately, the most obvious way to significantly reduce health-care costs without substantially decreasing the quality of care is rationing—that is, limiting the range of treatments and tests that insurance will cover in certain circumstances, a practice that runs counter to the prevailing any-care-at-any-cost ethos. Hardly a politician dares even to mouth the word "rationing," save as an expression of opprobrium.

Yet the fact is that the system already rations; we just don't acknowledge it openly. Every day on the front lines and in the back offices of the health-care profession ICU nurses, hospital executives, and Medicare and insurance-company administrators make difficult cost-versus-value decisions. How long should a man in a coma be allowed to linger in an expensive ICU bed while others who could benefit from the specialized care wait? Is it worth $7,000 to give Xigris—a drug to treat virulent infections that can develop in hospital settings—to an uninsured patient with less than three months to live? In a recent survey of 620 critical-care physicians, 68 percent said they had rationed medications or procedures in the preceding year. Such decisions are often morally complex, even agonizing—and often benefit patients with money: overall, people who have health insurance receive about twice as much medical care as those who lack it.

Without intervention this gap will most likely widen: a majority of Americans will continue to receive state-of-the-art care, whereas a growing minority will be shut out of the insurance system, finding themselves without access either to the cutting-edge treatments of 2004 or to proven forms of medical care that have been available for decades.

So the key question is not *whether* health care should be rationed in the United States; it already is. Rather, the question is *how* health care should be rationed. How should the potential benefits of reduced pain, improved quality of life, or extended life be weighed against the high costs of the medications or procedures involved? And who should weigh them? These are hard questions with high moral stakes. We do ourselves a disservice by dismissing them with a platitude like "You can't put a value on health." That may be true in the abstract, but one *can* put a value on different treatments and practices. When we decline to do so, we are automatically putting a lower value on other areas, such as education and security, in which increased spending might in fact add more to life expectancy and quality of life. By refusing even to countenance sensible limits on the health care citizens have a right to demand, we make universal health-care coverage—a worthy goal that we are long overdue in attaining—nearly impossible. It would be un-American to suggest that those who can afford truly comprehensive insurance—call it "Cadillac insurance"—should be prevented from buying it. And no one is suggesting that. But if we will not consider that perhaps not



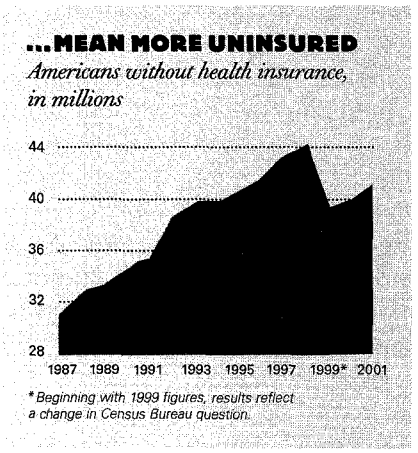


CHART DATA SOURCES: *THE WALL STREET JOURNAL*; CENTERS FOR MEDICARE AND MEDICAID SERVICES; U.S. CENSUS BUREAU

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Insurance Required

If mandatory insurance is good enough for your car . . .

Believe it or not, there is a politically appealing way to achieve universal health-care coverage: simply require all U.S. residents to buy insurance, with government help if necessary.

To understand why and how this might work, consider that the majority of those who lack health insurance are not unemployed. Nearly 60 percent of uninsured Americans work full time; another 16 percent work part time. These tend to be workers whose employers don't offer them health insurance (because they are low-wage or newly hired), or who can't afford to pay a share of the premiums.

In addition, about a third of the uninsured live in families with household incomes greater than $50,000 a year; many of these people could afford the costs of health insurance if they chose. Moreover, many of the uninsured are relatively young and healthy: about 40 percent are aged eighteen to thirty-four, and another 20 percent are under eighteen. This provides an opportunity. Requiring all these young, healthy Americans—who are currently gambling that they'll stay healthy—to enter the risk pool would drive down premiums for those Americans who currently have health insurance while lowering the cost of entry for those who don't.

Here's how it might work. States would establish insurance pools that would offer every American a choice among competing private insurance plans. Insurers offering coverage through these pools would be required to offer a core benefits package and could not discriminate on the basis of pre-existing conditions. Individuals could purchase more-comprehensive coverage if they wished.

Each year, according to a recent study published in the *Annals of Family Medicine*, 20 percent of people with insurance are forced to change health plans, resulting in higher costs and lower-quality care. A citizen-based (as opposed to employer-based) universal insurance program would eliminate this problem by enabling workers to keep their doctors and health plans when they changed jobs. And rather than being limited to the health plans chosen by their employers, workers could choose plans and levels of coverage from among competing private providers.

Under a universal citizen-based plan those employers who wished to continue administering health-care benefits could do so; but those who wanted to shed the administrative burden could choose instead to contribute a fixed amount (currently employers contribute more than $300 billion to employee health coverage each year) to an insurance pool or to the plans of their employees' choosing.

This proposal would cost the federal government somewhere on the order of $80 billion a year, with most of that money going to provide subsidies to those who couldn't afford the minimum cost of coverage themselves. But the plan would also save the nation the cost of uncompensated care (currently some $35 billion, which is passed on to employers and insured employees in the form of rising premiums), and it would recoup some of the $65 billion to $130 billion of labor productivity that is lost to untreated health problems each year.

Won't Americans balk at a radical proposal that forces even those who don't want health insurance to buy it? Actually, it's hardly radical: Americans are already well accustomed to the idea of mandatory insurance. After all, almost anyone who wants to drive a car is required to buy car insurance, and anyone who wants to carry a mortgage must buy homeowner's insurance. The details are different, but the idea is the same. Applying this principle—universal coverage in exchange for universal responsibility—makes economic, moral, and practical sense.

—*LAURIE RUBINER*

Laurie Rubiner is the director of the Universal Health Insurance Program at the New America Foundation.

everyone who pays premiums should be *guaranteed* Cadillac insurance, more Americans each year will be left unable to afford any coverage at all. At the very least we need to begin a national conversation about the meaning of "medical necessity"—for instance, does it include knee surgery for someone who is not in acute pain but wants to continue playing recreational tennis or touch football? what about bariatric surgery (stomach stapling) for those who are not morbidly obese?—and to launch an honest discussion about what kind of rationing would be fairest and most efficient.

To start the conversation, here's one scenario: Imagine a system in which everyone has insurance (including prescription-drug coverage) offering a basic standard of care almost equal to what the insured enjoy today, but people who want the very latest and most expensive treatments must either buy supplemental insurance or pay out of pocket. (For one vision of how coverage might be extended with little disruption, see the sidebar at left.) As innovations prove to offer dramatically better care, or somewhat better care at roughly equal cost, basic coverage would be extended to include them; but the standard for what could be included would be set high (perhaps with the help of an institute like the one proposed by Shannon Brownlee on the facing page). With fewer patients opting for expensive new treatments that are only marginally more effective than older ones, research doctors, drug companies, and medical-hardware makers could devote more of their R&D resources to making existing treatments cheaper and more effective. Though health-care spending will never stop growing completely, it would grow more slowly under this scenario. Similarly, although the rate of improvement in health-care quality might slow marginally, improvement would continue. America would still have care equal to the best in the world—and the system would cover more people. Would that sort of rationing really be so bad?

Don Peck is the director of The Atlantic*'s editorial-research staff.*

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[*Society*]

Information, Please

Sounds crazy, but one way to arrest the spiraling cost of health care would be to figure out what treatments actually work

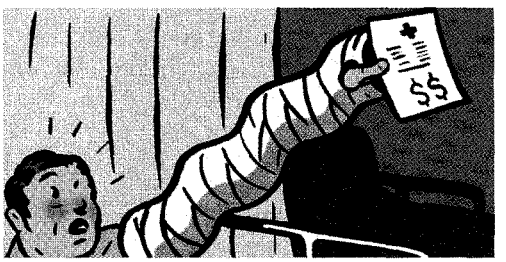
BY SHANNON BROWNLEE

Health-care spending is currently rising at a rate of around eight percent a year, and a large proportion of the health care that is delivered in this country simply drives up costs without improving health or increasing longevity.

Previous efforts to address these problems have neglected an element so basic that its wisdom has largely been ignored—namely, reliable information, the lack of which hampers the efficiency of the health-care market and prevents doctors and hospitals from learning what constitutes high-quality care. It has been more than a decade since the manifesto of "evidence-based medicine" was published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, yet much medical care is still based more on intuition than on science. Doctors don't know, for example, whether regular mammograms for women in their forties save lives, and they ignore evidence that Celebrex, a widely prescribed and much ballyhooed prescription painkiller, is no more effective than ibuprofen, which costs one tenth as much. When common medical practices are put to the test, as only a small fraction have been, many turn out to be either ineffective or excessively risky—at least for some patients. In one well-known example a clinical trial that ended in 2002 showed that hormone-replacement medication, which generated $1.2 billion in sales in 2000 and which postmenopausal women have been taking for more than thirty years, does not lower the risk of heart attack, as previously believed; in fact, it appears to raise it.

As a result of such uncertainty health-care consumers—patients, employers, and insurers—cannot choose the best care at the most reasonable price. As health-care buyers, insurers—whose costs keep rising—have little data with which to judge the effectiveness of all the hospitalizations, tests, office visits, and procedures they are paying for, and thus no rational basis for adjusting reimbursement according to the quality of care.

More information would increase both the quality of health care and the efficiency of the system—if only someone would gather the data. Most insurers, with the exception of Medicare and a couple of the largest private companies, don't compile the records that might help them improve health-care quality, largely because they lack the expertise and manpower to do so. The National Institutes of Health, which have traditionally focused on finding cures rather than on improving existing medical practices, set aside less than one thirtieth of their combined budgets—amounting to $800 million annually—for such research. The Agency for Health Care Policy and Research—the one government agency that was devoted to gathering outcomes data—saw its budget slashed in 1995 after lobbying by a determined and influential group of doctors who didn't like the results of the agency's analysis.



Here's what's needed: a Clinical Sciences Institute, which would serve as a clearinghouse for outcomes data. The institute would need the political insulation of the Federal Reserve Board; it could be funded by the federal government either alone or in concert with private insurers. Its first task would be to gather information on patient outcomes from hospitals and doctors in order to determine who is delivering the safest and most effective care. It would also pull together all available evidence on current medical practices. If it couldn't determine the effectiveness of a treatment or a test using existing data, the institute would fund a clinical trial to get the answer. It should initiate clinical trials like the one that found that hormone-replacement therapy increases the risk of heart attack, and head-to-head comparisons of drugs like Celebrex and Vioxx with their cheaper substitutes.

With real evidence in hand, doctors could begin to base standards of care more on science than on intuition. Insurers would have a rational basis for deciding which drugs and procedures to cover—and they could adjust reimbursement to hospitals and doctors according to who did the best job. Patients would know which doctors and hospitals to choose. The danger, of course, is that weighing costs against the effectiveness of treatments and drugs would raise the specter of medical rationing. Polls consistently show that Americans will reject any plan that threatens to deny them potentially lifesaving treatment for reasons of cost. But patients might feel differently about all the medical care they think they want—and deserve—if they had access to clear and accurate information showing that the most expensive drugs weren't necessarily the best and that many treatments and tests posed unseen risks without many proven benefits.

Put into practice, the information provided by the Clinical Sciences Institute would improve the quality of care, and might even save billions of dollars that are now wasted on unnecessary care. Here's just one example: A recent study found that carotid endarterectomy, a $15,000 surgery performed on about 150,000 patients a year to prevent stroke, turns out to pose a greater risk of triggering a stroke than preventing one in two thirds of patients. If surgeons stopped performing this procedure on the wrong patients, limiting it to the one third it actually benefits, they could save the U.S. health-care system $1.5 billion a year.

Shannon Brownlee is a senior fellow at the New America Foundation.

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[Part III: *Governance*]

The $45 Trillion Problem

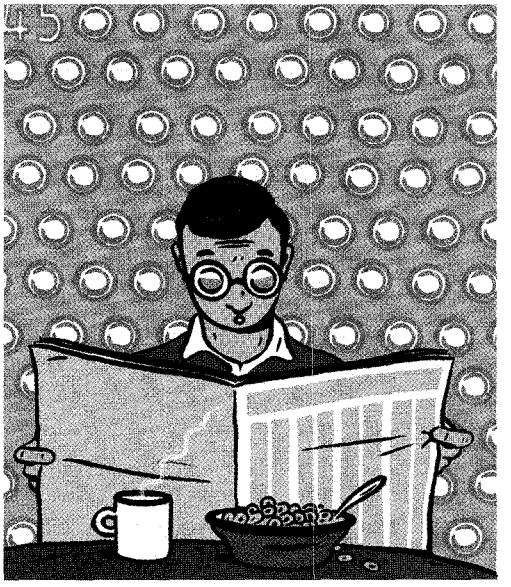
Carefree spending, huge tax cuts, and—above all—unalterable demographic facts have put us all in a box. And there's no easy way out

BY NATHAN LITTLEFIELD

Even if you think government budget numbers are generally not very interesting (and they do tend to blur together into an eye-glazing morass), here's a number to quicken the pulse: $45.5 trillion. That's the size of the long-term gap between the federal government's projected outlays (future spending plus current debt) and its projected revenues. Most government budget projections look only a brief distance into the future—a year, perhaps, or ten at the most. But Jagadeesh Gokhale and Kent Smetters, economists working at the Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland and the University of Pennsylvania, respectively, have looked further into the future and determined that, in effect, if the U.S. government were a company its owner would have to *pay* a rational investor $45.5 trillion to take it off his hands. To put this figure in perspective: the entire U.S. economy generated only about $10.4 trillion last year, and total household wealth is currently only about $39 trillion.

This year the national debt is likely to hit $7.5 trillion, or about $25,600 for every American. But each American's share of the government's long-term unfunded liabilities—meaning tomorrow's debt as well as today's—comes to about $156,000. Though no single generation will have to cover the whole $45.5 trillion (and the generations that are already in or very near retirement may not need to cover any of it), ultimately some Americans will have to pay, through dramatically higher taxes or dramatically reduced government services or both.

Of course, warnings about government deficits have taken on something of a Chicken Little quality over the past twenty years. Since the end of World War II the annual budget has been in balance or surplus only eight times out of fifty-eight—and the sky has yet to fall. This is because even perpetual deficits are sustainable as long as the economy expands faster than the national debt. Moreover, budget forecasts frequently change with unexpected increases in tax revenue, changes in the business cycle, policy alterations, and other factors, which can suddenly turn presumed future shortfalls into surpluses and vice versa. Today the Congressional Budget Office's baseline ten-year projections show a deficit on the order of $1.4 trillion—but projections made just three years ago showed a ten-year budget *surplus* of $5.6 trillion.



The long-term imbalance between the amount of taxes that Americans are accustomed to paying and the level of government services that Americans are accustomed to receiving will not, however, be changed by any alterations in short-term projections. Under any reasonable set of assumptions about economic growth, the natural growth rate of health-care costs, and other important factors, the gap between what we expect to pay and what we expect to receive is enormous. The magnitude of this looming gap has been masked for the past several decades by a demographic blip—the Baby Boom, which for nearly forty years has provided a large base of workers who contribute payroll and income taxes while consuming relatively few government services. In 2012, however, when the first Boomers hit retirement age, the situation will begin to reverse: a large proportion of the population will begin drawing more heavily on government services, while the relative number of taxpaying workers will start to shrink. Today there are nineteen elderly for every 100 working-age Americans; by 2050 there will be thirty-five for every 100. This means trouble: in 2015 Medicare taxes will fall short of Medicare expenditures for the first time; in 2018 Social Security payments will outstrip payroll-tax revenues. In short, if we don't make policy changes soon, the government's financial situation will begin imploding within the next ten years.

The implications are profound: by 2050 the very nature of the federal government may be radically different. At the extremes the country has two basic options. One is to retain Social Security and Medicare as broad middle-class entitlements, maintain Medicaid, hold defense spending near present levels (about 3.5 percent of GDP), and keep the rest of the government at its current size. In this scenario federal spending would grow from 19.5 percent of GDP today to 39.7 percent in 2075, resulting in a government proportionally larger than Germany's or France's. To fully cover a U.S. government of this size, lawmakers would need some way to permanently increase tax revenue by 70 percent a year—beginning today.

The second option is to hold taxes near current levels—they have ranged from 17 to 20 percent of GDP every year since 1960—while ending entitlements as we know them. If we decided that we wanted to keep taxes relatively constant, we would need to cut Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security benefits in half *immediately*; if we waited longer to act, the cuts in those programs would have to be even deeper. The social impact of such cuts could be mitigated by, for ex-

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ample, subjecting Social Security and Medicare benefits to a means test, so that benefits would be reduced more (or entirely) for affluent citizens; compared with across-the-board benefit reductions, this would hold down increases in poverty and poor health among the elderly. But any cuts of this magnitude would still be likely to increase poverty, make three-generation households more common (as some seniors were forced to move in with their children), and perhaps even reduce the average American life-span, since many poor and elderly people would no longer be able to afford medical care.

To put into perspective just how large a share of government expenditures entitlement programs are expected to consume over the coming decades, consider a third option: Couldn't we manage to keep tax levels constant *and* retain Medicare and Social Security if we were willing to eliminate, permanently and completely, all other government spending on everything including the military? Nope; wouldn't work. The gap between tax revenues and entitlement expenditures is so large that not even reducing the federal government to a shell would close the long-term deficit.

Needless to say, none of these three options would appeal to many Americans. A more desirable path would fall somewhere between the extremes—raising taxes some and decreasing services and entitlements some.

What we should be doing to prepare for the future is talking forthrightly about which painful tradeoffs we are willing to make: Do we care more about keeping taxes low or about preserving entitlements? Meanwhile, we should be trying to restrain expenditures so as not to make the problem worse.

What we are in fact doing, however, is almost exactly the opposite. No one is asking the hard questions about what kind of society we would like to be. And any semblance of fiscal discipline seems to have been completely abandoned, by both Congress and the White House. Defense spending has risen by 22 percent since Bush took office. This increase was understandable—perhaps necessary—given the war on terror. But *nondefense* discretionary spending has also risen during the past three years, by 14 percent—more than it increased during either the eight years of the Reagan Administration or the eight years of the Clinton Administration. Recent tax cuts, meanwhile, have added hundreds of billions of dollars to the ten-year deficit. And Congress just passed a major increase in Medicare spending (projected to be $400 billion over the next decade alone) through the addition of a drug benefit. A recent joint statement by the Committee for Economic Development (composed of prominent business and education leaders), the Concord Coalition (a bipartisan group focused on fiscal issues), and the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (a left-leaning think tank) described the current budgetary situation as the "most fiscally irresponsible" in U.S. history.

What has produced this predicament? In part it is the result of an ideological struggle between the political parties, in which each side responds to the other by making the situation worse. Influential Republicans, both in and out of the Bush Administration, are convinced that running budget deficits will eventually compel a dramatic decrease in federal spending, ultimately starving many government programs of money entirely. (In the infamous formulation of the Republican strategist Grover Norquist, the goal is to shrink the federal government until it is small enough to "drown it in the bathtub.") Democrats, for their part, call for large and varied spending increases, knowing that the Republicans (who are causing the deficits to balloon with tax cuts and defense spending) are currently ill positioned to criticize them for lack of fiscal restraint.

The most cynical interpretation of what's going on here is that both Republicans and Democrats recognize the fiscal disaster looming on the horizon—but rather than attempting to prevent the coming of this disaster, each side is scrambling to maximize its preferred policy outcome (the Republicans by lowering taxes, the Democrats by strengthening entitlements for seniors and other government programs), so that when the crisis arrives, and painful adjustments become necessary, each party will feel that it is starting from a stronger bargaining position.

Fundamentally, though, the reason we are doing nothing to address these problems is that legislators are generally reluctant to focus on the long-term consequences of their policy decisions. For one thing, we lack the tools to gauge such consequences properly. The most common measures of the government's fiscal health, one- and ten-year budget projections, don't capture the real state of federal finances; not only are they myopic and disproportionately

■ IF THE U.S. GOVERNMENT WERE A COMPANY, ITS OWNER WOULD HAVE TO *PAY* A RATIONAL INVESTOR $45.5 TRILLION TO TAKE IT OFF HIS HANDS.

■ EITHER WE CAN BOOST TAX REVENUES BY 70 PERCENT A YEAR, OR WE CAN END ENTITLEMENT BENEFITS AS WE KNOW THEM.

■ NO ONE IS ASKING THE HARD QUESTIONS ABOUT WHAT KIND OF SOCIETY WE WANT TO BE.

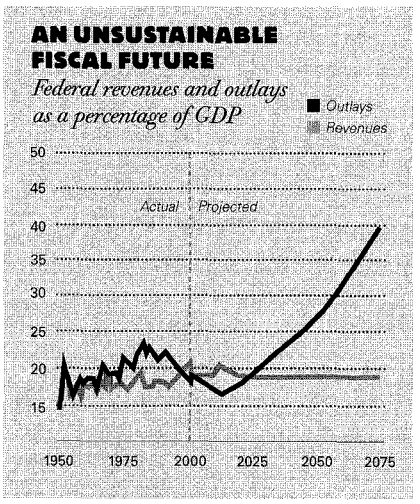

CHART DATA SOURCE: *LONG-RANGE FISCAL POLICY BRIEF*, CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE

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influenced by short-term fluctuations in the business cycle, but they explicitly exclude entitlement costs.

Thus, as an important first step the federal government should officially adopt a more comprehensive accounting measure, along the lines of the one produced by the economists Gokhale and Smetters. Had such a measure been in use throughout the 1990s, it would most likely have revealed a slowly deteriorating long-term fiscal picture at a time when we were giddy about rising short-term government surpluses. A more realistic long-term picture might have given at least some politicians reason to pause before indulging in the recent frenzy of tax cuts and spending increases. A helpful second step would be to reinstate rules that make deficit spending more difficult and help to rein in an increasingly anarchic budget process. (Such rules were allowed to expire in 2002.)

Getting out of the fiscal box we are now in will be painful; as a society we will have to make hard choices. But prompt action and intelligent policy changes can minimize the pain. The longer we wait, the larger and blunter the adjustments we will force onto future generations. If we continue with the status quo, and simply allow debt to accumulate for years, the result will be not only higher tax rates and diminished government services for our children and grandchildren, but also (because of the upward pressure on interest rates exerted by so much outstanding debt) a damaged economy.

The appropriate size and scope of government is a legitimate matter for debate. But we should be actively debating—not backing ourselves into a corner so that our choices about size and scope are tightly circumscribed. And whatever we decide the government's role in society should be, we will have to pay for it. This is not merely an economic matter but a moral one. Future generations will pay for our profligacy; by the fiscal choices we've made (or failed to make), we are lowering the living standards of our grandchildren and depriving them of the ability to shape a government that fits their priorities. ■

Nathan Littlefield is an Atlantic *staff researcher.*

[*Governance*]

Radical Tax Reform

The tax system is unfair and inefficient, and fails to generate enough revenue to cover government expenditures. Here's how to fix that

BY MAYA MACGUINEAS

We have become accustomed to thinking that taxes, like hemlines, can only go up or down. This isn't true. Over the centuries changes in the *form* of U.S. taxes have been at least as dramatic as changes in the *rate* of taxation.

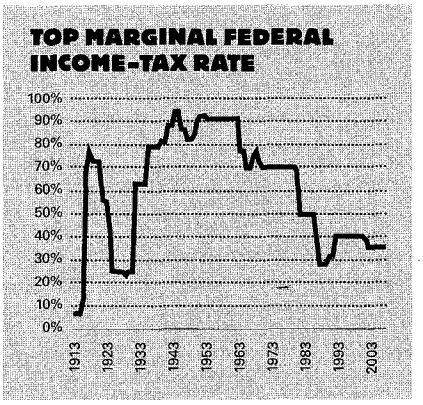
For instance, most federal revenues now come from personal and corporate income taxes, and from the payroll taxes that fund Social Security and Medicare. But most government revenues originally came from excise taxes on luxury items such as tobacco, spirits, and sugar, and throughout much of the nineteenth century the bulk of federal revenues came from tariffs on imported manufactured goods. In fact, the federal income tax, which we tend to think of as an eternal fixture, was introduced as an emergency measure during the Civil War, and did not become permanent until the Sixteenth Amendment was ratified, in 1913. Even then income taxes were levied on only the richest Americans. Not until World War II did the income tax metamorphose into something we would easily recognize today: a mass tax that reached the middle class.

Our tax system has continued to evolve in the postwar era. The second half of the twentieth century witnessed a decreased reliance on progressive taxes (those that, like the income tax, charge higher earners at a steeper rate) and an increased reliance on regressive taxes, such as payroll and sales taxes.

In analyzing the tax system we need to look not just at rates but at the forms that taxes take. There are three basic questions to consider: Is the system fair? Does it encourage efficiency? Does it raise enough to pay for government spending? Let's take each question in turn.

Are today's taxes fair? In some ways this is the hardest of the questions to answer, because it requires a definition of "fairness." This could be rephrased as: To what extent is one's overall tax burden commensurate with one's ability to meet it? In this regard taxes are much less fair than they were a generation ago, because over the past several decades tax reformers have focused on reducing the federal income tax while ignoring the explosive growth of other, more regressive taxes.

In a sense the federal income tax remains one of the most progressive taxes there is: half of all the revenue it generates comes from workers earning more than $200,000 a year. But income-tax rates are actually not nearly as progressive as they were several decades ago: the top marginal income-tax rate has declined since the Kennedy Administration, from 91 percent in 1960 to 35 percent in President George W. Bush's plan. Meanwhile, the corporate income tax—whose effects are felt more directly by



shareholders than workers—has contributed less and less to overall federal revenues, as changes in the tax code have allowed corporations to shield more and more of their income. At the beginning of World War II the corporate income tax provided almost 50 percent of federal revenues; today it accounts for only 10 percent.

Decreasing the progressivity of certain taxes, and relying more on regressive taxes, shifts the tax burden down

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the income scale from the rich to the middle class and the working poor. This is exactly what has happened over the past several decades. Since the end of World War II state and local taxes—which are far less progressive than federal taxes—have more than doubled as a share of the American economy, while total federal tax revenues have slightly decreased as a percentage of GDP.

Social Security and Medicare payroll taxes, also regressive, have grown to the point where they are the largest federal taxes that most American families pay. Though the basic structure of the federal payroll tax has hardly changed in fifty years, its rate has been raised repeatedly. Today it is 15.3 percent, and all earners, whether they make $25,000 a year or $250,000, pay it on the very first dollar of earnings. But the 12.4 percent Social Security tax applies only to wage earnings below $87,900—meaning that the $25,000-a-year earner (every dollar of whose income is taxed at 15.3 percent) pays a higher effective tax rate than the $250,000-a-year earner (most of whose income is exempt). And investment income and employer benefits—which accrue disproportionately to high-income earners—go completely untaxed, making the system still more regressive. People who live entirely off inherited wealth pay no payroll taxes at all.

Of course, reasonable people—and even reasonable economists—can disagree about how the tax burden should be distributed; a tax system's relative progressivity can affect how efficiently an economy functions and how quickly it grows. (More on this in a moment.) But current economic realities suggest that we should be making taxes *more* progressive, not less. For instance, the benefits of recent productivity growth—the result of rapid technological advances—have not spread evenly through American society; most of the gains have flowed to investors and high-income professionals. The result? A degree of economic inequality not seen in this country since before the Depression. If fairness means taxing people in accordance with their ability to pay, it is unfair to shift taxes away from the few who have benefited most from the New Economy and toward the many who have benefited much less (or even been hurt). But that is exactly what many of the tax reforms of the past several decades have done.

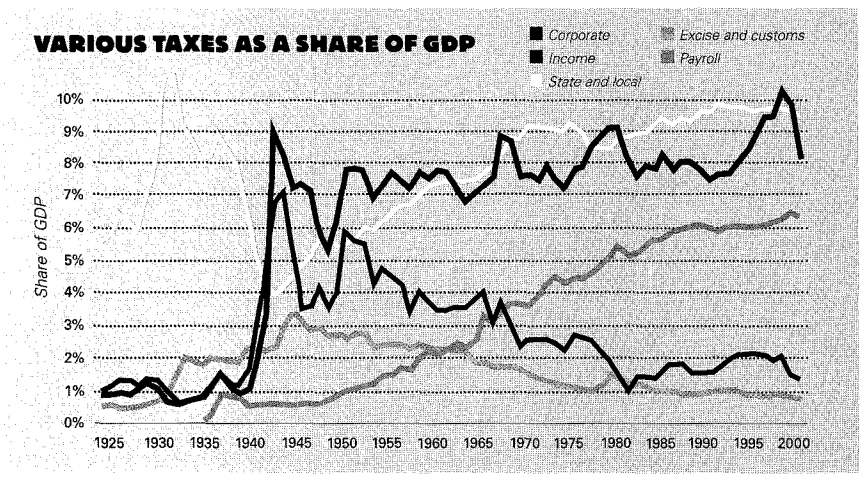

CHART DATA SOURCES: (OPPOSITE & ABOVE) BUREAU OF THE CENSUS, OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET

Is today's tax system efficient? In other words, does it send the right signals to individuals and businesses, and promote economic growth? Not really.

The dominant economic themes of our time have been globalization and technological change. Both these forces have intensified international competition, particularly in the manufacturing sector—a fact that has enormous implications for our tax system. Globalization has made it easier for multinational corporations to follow the lowest labor costs and tax rates around the world; countries that can keep their tax burdens low have a competitive advantage over those that can't. During the past two decades efforts to reduce taxes on dividends and capital gains have all been aimed at lowering the cost of capital—and thereby encouraging investment and boosting competitiveness—in the United States. This is a sensible strategy as far as it goes—but its application has been only piecemeal, and has produced uneven effects.

Furthermore, the number of elderly people as a percentage of the overall U.S. population will rapidly increase in the decades ahead. Common sense dictates that our tax system encourage saving—both to boost the economy and to help pay for the Baby Boomers' retirement. The current system, however, favors consumption, which is one reason why we have one of the lowest saving rates among advanced industrialized countries. As a consequence, we are staring at not only trillions of dollars' worth of payments we cannot afford to make to future Social Security and Medicare recipients but also a growing international debt. At some point we will finally have to finance the retirement of millions of Americans and pay off the foreign investors who have lent us money over the years—a task that will be made much easier if we start saving now.

Given increased global competition and our graying population, it is very important that our tax system not only encourage saving but also discourage harmful consumption. Too many behaviors that impose "negative externalities"—social costs that are not factored into the direct accounting figures—go untaxed. For instance, Humvee owners don't have to pay taxes for the environmental destruction wrought by their vehicles. Moreover, many of the indirect costs of the country's dependence on oil—such as the expense (including national-security expenses) of shipping oil from the Middle East, along with the damage it does to the environment—go untaxed. A more efficient tax system would discourage this waste, and provide incentives for more-productive investment.

Are our taxes sufficient? The fundamental requirement of any tax system is that it raise enough revenue to pay for government expenditures. Although it's defensible—and even desirable, given the stimulus effect—to run short-term budget deficits during an economic downturn, this borrowing should be offset by surpluses

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during the boom period that follows.

By this standard our tax system is a failure. Last year, in large part because of recent tax cuts, federal tax revenues as a percentage of GDP were lower than they have been at any time since the Eisenhower Administration, falling for the third straight year—an unprecedented occurrence when the economy is coming out of a recession and we are at war. Meanwhile, spending on government programs grew by nearly nine percent—more than the average growth rate during the 1990s. The result is the largest federal budget deficit in American history.

A TAX PLAN *(the author's proposal)*

Taxes to cut	
Payroll taxes	$720 billion
Estate taxes	$30 billion
Total	– $750 billion
Spending reductions	
Ending corporate welfare	$70 billion
Means-testing entitlements	$60 billion
Total	+ $130 billion
New sources of revenue	
Progressive consumption tax	$500 billion
Closing loopholes	$150 billion
Tradable carbon permits	$80 billion
Taxing inheritances	$60 billion
Spectrum-use fees	$30 billion
Total	+ $820 billion
Grand total	**+ $200 billion**

Meanwhile, the states are in a fiscal mess that stems from several factors: state tax cuts throughout the 1990s, increased spending on government programs, escalating health-care costs, and the dampening effects of the nationwide recession. But state deficits have been made worse by the fact that many state income taxes are tied to the federal tax code and thus rise and fall with federal taxes.

Neither the federal government nor state governments are doing enough to redress these structural deficits. In light of the inevitable expansion of public pension and health-care programs that will accompany the retirement of the Baby Boom generation, we should have been building up either government reserves or individual savings. Instead we have been allowing our personal savings to fall and have been cutting taxes and increasing spending, thereby locking ourselves into deficits for decades to come. This is like kicking a live grenade down the road—and then walking up to it and kicking it again.

What if we decided to fix the tax system, to make it fairer, more efficient, and sufficient to pay for government outlays?

Only four basic things can be taxed: total income (including earnings from investment and other sources), wages, consumption, and wealth. Currently the federal government heavily taxes earnings, both wages and total income, while state and local governments rely more on taxing spending and wealth (mainly in the form of real estate). Roughly three quarters of all taxes are raised from what people earn, and only 15 percent comes from what they spend.

With these facts as our starting point, what reforms should we make? Let's start with how to make the system fairer. There are two options. We could make already progressive taxes even more progressive—for instance, by boosting marginal rates on the highest income brackets. Or we could eliminate the payroll tax and replace it with a more progressive tax. In recent years most left-leaning reformers have promoted the first option. That's the wrong choice. The purpose of the tax code should not be to punish rising incomes or wealth creation; besides, there are limits to how much we can tax income and capital gains without undermining our competitive position in the world. A better approach, therefore, would be the second. To begin with, we should reduce taxes on wages by eliminating the regressive payroll tax that currently funds Social Security and Medicare. A payroll tax might make sense as a way to fund *individual* medical-savings or Social Security accounts—that is, an individual's payroll deductions would go directly into that same individual's retirement account. But as a means of financing a redistributive universal social program, the payroll tax too often ends up funneling the wages of middle- and working-class Americans to affluent retirees.

Eliminating the payroll tax would have other advantages as well. For example, it would free employers from matching employees' Social Security contributions, which would encourage them to create new jobs. It would also effectively increase wages, making it easier for workers to save their own money for retirement. And it would produce a substantial political benefit, one that would make it easier to solve long-term problems with Social Security and Medicare. Currently the payroll tax creates the misconception that people have a "right" to their Social Security and Medicare benefits. Not only is this false as a matter of law, but it makes it extremely difficult to reform these struggling programs—for example, by subjecting benefits for affluent retirees to a means test.

Eliminating payroll taxes could make the system much fairer at a stroke. But absent the payroll tax, how would Social Security and Medicare get funded? The ideal replacement would be a tax that boosted the saving rate, helping to increase productivity and build the capital to fuel the long-term growth we need. There are two approaches that might be effective in encouraging a higher saving rate. The first is to increase incentives for saving by reducing taxes on income and capital gains, while creating targeted tax breaks for saving, such as tax-sheltered IRAs. The second is to punish consumption more heavily—especially unnecessary consumption. We have already gone about as far as we can with the first approach; further reducing taxes on income and capital gains would further compromise the fairness of the system. But we have not ventured far at all with the second approach, which would allow us to discourage consumption without impairing the economy or making the system less fair.

It is true that state and local governments, which rely heavily on sales taxes, already do levy taxes on consumption. But these taxes tend to be highly regressive:

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proportionally, they take the biggest bite out of the smallest paychecks. There is an even bigger problem, too, in that sales taxes do not apply to most services. Not only does this penalize the manufacturing sector (because its products are taxed), but as the service sector becomes a larger share of the overall economy, the tax base shrinks. Furthermore, Congress has thus far exempted Internet commerce from taxation, thereby depriving states of substantial potential revenues. Simply increasing existing consumption taxes, in short, would not make the economy more efficient or the tax system more fair.

But what about a different kind of consumption tax—one that is both efficient and fair? Imagine a "progressive consumption tax" levied not on individual purchases but on total spending, as measured by the difference between what you earn and what you save. It might work like this: no tax at all on the first $25,000 you spent, a 10 percent tax on spending from $25,000 to $100,000, and a 15 percent tax on all spending above $100,000. In effect, basic necessities would not be taxed, and luxuries would be taxed at higher rates. This plan would be simple to execute. Each year taxpayers would calculate their total income from wages, investment income, and other sources, just as they do now. But then they would take a second step, subtracting the value of all their savings that year—such as savings accrued in a bank account, through a 401(k) plan, or through an investment fund (all of which are easily tracked, meaning that it would be hard for cheats to escape detection)—from their total income. The resulting figure would be the base amount to which the consumption tax would apply, at progressive rates. The less you spent, the lower your tax rate would be. Low-income earners would for the most part be taxed less onerously, since they spend less; and middle- and high-income earners would have an incentive to save their money, preparing for retirement and bolstering the country's long-term economic prospects. A national progressive consumption tax would go a long way toward recouping revenues lost from the elimination of the payroll tax, and it would make the system fairer, too.

Last we come to the question of how to ensure that tax revenues are sufficient to pay for government expenditures. Even if the economy continues to recover from recession, the recent tax cuts and spending increases almost guarantee that the federal government will be deep in red ink for decades to come.

Once again we have two broad choices: we can increase the rates on what we already tax, or we can broaden the revenue base by taxing new things. The latter approach will yield both greater fairness and greater efficiency.

We can begin by eliminating a lot of "tax expenditures"—better known as tax loopholes. Many forms of income—including government entitlements and employer-provided health benefits—are sheltered from taxation by exemptions, deductions, or credits. For every one of these dollars we don't tax, we have to impose higher rates on the dollars we *do* tax in order to raise the same amount of money. This can be both inefficient (since higher marginal tax rates discourage work) and unfair (since two people earning the same amount of income through different kinds of compensation—or spending the same income in different ways—can pay dramatically different amounts in taxes).

■ THE U.S. TAX SYSTEM IS FAR LESS FAIR THAN IT WAS A GENERATION AGO.

■ IT ALSO SENDS THE WRONG SIGNALS—DISCOURAGING SAVING, SPURRING CONSUMPTION.

■ WE SHOULD ELIMINATE THE REGRESSIVE PAYROLL TAX AND REPLACE IT WITH A PROGRESSIVE CONSUMPTION TAX.

We should turn next to slashing corporate welfare. Most industry-specific tax benefits insulate certain companies from competition that would force them to be more productive. If we stopped treating farming—to take just one example—as a favored industry, we would save $20 billion annually.

Next we should rethink the estate tax. Despite outcries over the "death tax," transfers of wealth through bequests largely escape taxation. But the estate tax in its current form may not be the fairest way to derive revenue from such transfers. Consider two families—one in which a wealthy patriarch leaves $10 million to a single heir, the other in which the same amount is divided among twenty-five heirs. Under current law all the heirs' inheritances would be taxed at the same rate, no matter the amount received—whether $10 million or a small fraction thereof.

A fair approach would be to repeal the existing estate tax and treat inheritance income and wage income the same way. This would simultaneously broaden the federal revenue base and lower the top rates at which heirs can be taxed.

Even if we subjected entitlements to a means test, closed tax loopholes, cut corporate welfare, and made all inheritance transfers subject to income tax, the government would still face a long-term deficit. Thus we need to find some other sources of revenue. One possibility is to levy taxes on pollution and the use of nonrenewable resources—a perfect example of taxing what you don't want in order to avoid taxing the activities you want to encourage. Another possibility is spectrum user fees. Rights to the public airwaves, which are valued at hundreds of billions of dollars, are practically given away. We should charge annual fees for the right to use and profit from publicly owned airwaves.

Radical tax reform won't happen overnight. In the past the impetus for major reform has almost always been dire need—either the need to pay for wars and other unplanned events or the need to shift tax burdens when growing income disparities have led to political discontent. So far the shifting of the tax burden from capital and the rich toward labor and the middle class has yet to produce the sort of populist rebellion the nation has witnessed in the past. But it may soon do so. Even if it doesn't, another strong incentive for reform—a fiscal crisis caused by mounting deficits—looms not far in the distance. ■

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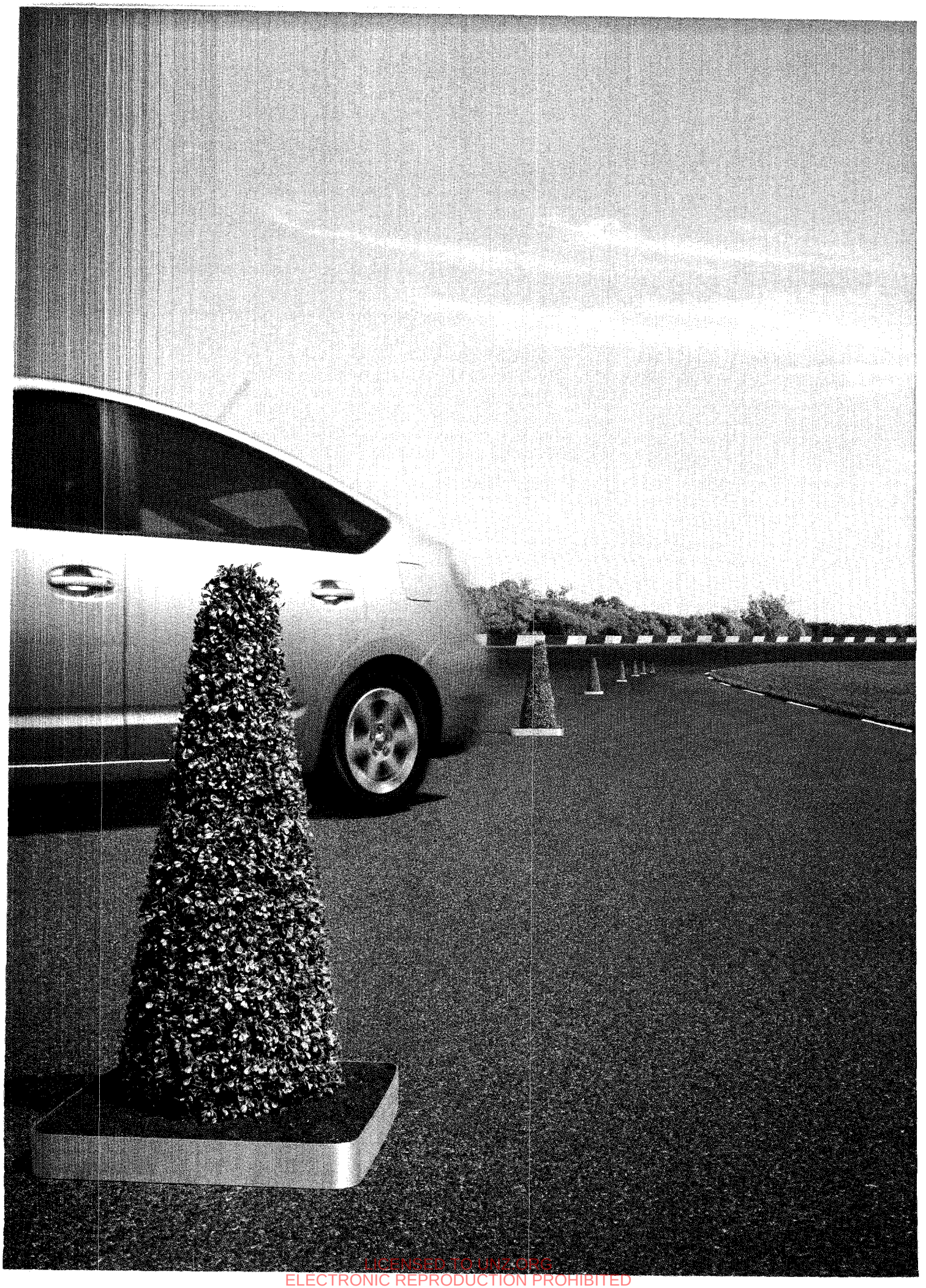

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[*Governance*]

The Chieftains and the Church

An intellectual audit of the Democrats and the Republicans

BY TED HALSTEAD

This year marks the 150th anniversary of the rivalry between the Democratic and Republican Parties. Ever since 1854, when the implosion of the Whigs paved the way for the birth of the Republican Party (twenty-six years after the emergence of the Democrats), this rivalry has dominated and even defined American politics. Although the reign of these two parties has endured for well over half the life of our republic, it would be a mistake to assume that either party has remained consistent—or even recognizable.

Quick—which party stands for small government, states' rights, and laissez-faire economics? Which favors an activist federal government, public infrastructure projects, and expanded civil rights? Today the answers would be Republican and Democratic, respectively. Yet each party was founded on precisely the principles now associated with the other. And consider that the South, originally a stronghold of the Democrats, is now the anchor of the Republicans. But the most dramatic inversion in partisan identity is this: the Republicans in recent years have emerged as revolutionaries, while the Democrats have relegated themselves to defending tradition and the status quo.

The 150th anniversary of their rivalry provides an occasion for an intellectual audit of these two ever changing parties.

THE PARTY OF THE CHURCH

Let's begin with the Republicans, who under President George W. Bush have become the party of big ideas. There is no denying the range and boldness of their initiatives, from privatizing Social Security to institutionalizing a doctrine of preventive warfare; from eliminating taxes on capital gains and dividends to pulling out of numerous international treaties; from encouraging school choice to remaking the Middle East. This boldness is in itself an anomaly for a party that in past decades has tended to revere inherited norms and institutions, but it is just one of the signs that this is not the Republican Party of George W.'s father. Indeed, its identity seems to have no clear lineage.

The modern Republican tradition is usually thought to have originated with the firebrand rhetoric of Barry Goldwater, which ultimately paved the way for the two-term presidency of Ronald Reagan. The Reagan revolution was built on three unifying principles: anti-communism, social conservatism, and limited government. The sudden end of the Cold War left the Republicans with only two of these principles around which to organize. But most Americans let it be known that they were not particularly interested in fighting domestic culture wars, much less in turning back the clock on newfound personal freedoms. The Republican Party's anti-government agenda, meanwhile, culminated in the Gingrich revolution of 1994, which sought to downsize all sorts of federal programs. To Newt Gingrich's surprise, the majority of Americans didn't really want a dramatic cutback in government programs and perceived his agenda as extremist.

George W. Bush is the first Republican President to recognize that the constituency for the Goldwater-Reagan-Gingrich anti-government crusade is dwindling—inspiring him to try to reposition his party. Although Bush calls his new and improved governing philosophy "compassionate conservatism," a more accurate description might be "big-spending conservatism."

Unlike Reagan, who shrank nondefense spending considerably and vetoed a number of spending bills in his first three years, Bush has so far increased total federal spending by a dizzying 20.4 percent and has yet to veto a single spending bill. The contrast is all the more dramatic when Bush is compared with Bill Clinton, who declared the end of big government, who in his first three years increased total government spending by only 3.5 percent, and who actually reduced discretionary spending by 8.8 percent. Clinton's Republican successor is quietly reversing course with a vengeance, leading the libertarian Cato Institute to accuse Bush of "governing like a Frenchman."

The President's reason for engineering this reversal, apparently, is to overcome the budgetary obstacles to parts of his agenda. For example, he seeks to privatize public services and enhance individual choice—school choice, retirement choice (through private Social Security accounts), and medical choice (through private health insurance instead of government-run programs). But moving from one-size-fits-all government programs to more-flexible privatized ones may require more public outlay, not less, than simply preserving the status quo. As the price for bringing competition into Medicare, for instance, Bush enacted a prescription-drug benefit that represents the largest expansion in entitlements since Lyndon Johnson's Great Society. And moving to private Social Security accounts would entail funding two entirely separate systems during the transition period.

Fighting the war on terrorism, too, is expensive. But rather than adjusting his agenda accordingly, Bush has pushed through three huge tax cuts in as many years. In the process he has fatally undermined the coherence of his overall program. Fusing vast new spending with deep tax cuts, Bush is locking into place

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long-term structural deficits whose costs to both our nation and the Republican Party would be difficult to overstate.

To understand why the Republican majority in Congress is playing along with the President, it helps to think of today's Republican Party as a theocracy; call it the Party of the Church. Under Bush the party is guided by a core ideology that it pursues with a near religious fervor, regardless of countervailing facts, changing circumstances, or even opposition among the conservative ranks. The President and his inner circle not only set the canon but demand—and usually get—strict compliance from Republican legislators in both houses of Congress. The two central tenets of Bush's orthodoxy are tax cuts and regime change in Iraq. He has staked the success of his presidency on them.

In the Party of the Church the theologians' role is played by hundreds of conservative scholars in think tanks, at publications, and on radio talk shows. That the academy is missing from this list is not an accident: conservative scholars could not find comfortable perches within university settings. But being banished from the academy served the Republican theologians remarkably well, because it enabled them to cultivate a style of argument and writing far better suited to reaching—and converting—both the public and politicians. The infrastructure of conservative thought is as well financed as it is complex; it includes seminaries in which to train conservative young scholars (the Heritage Foundation even has special dormitories for its interns), and what might be thought of as separate "orders," each upholding a slightly different school of thought—from the libertarians to the social conservatives to the neoconservatives. This sprawling idea machine produces not only policy innovations but also the language ("welfare queens," "the death tax") with which to sell the party's agenda.

Not surprisingly, the Party of the Church is highly moralistic. President Bush tends to frame issues in terms of ethical absolutes: good and evil, right and wrong. Moralism may or may not make for good politics, but it rarely makes for good policy, because it substitutes wishful and parochial thinking for careful analysis. Its ascendancy reflects a broader shift in the Republican Party—a shift away from an identity that was secular, pragmatic, and northeastern toward one that, like the President himself, is more evangelical and southern. Nowhere is this more evident than in foreign policy, where Bush—reviving what the historian Walter Russell Mead calls the Jacksonian tradition—is turning his back on both the realpolitik of Richard Nixon and the conservative internationalism of Reagan and his own father, making pre-emption rather than containment the central organizing principle and favoring unilateral action over multilateral diplomacy. In doing so Bush has discarded hundreds of years of international law and decades of American tradition. The most immediate cost is that the United States has alienated much of the world in the name of making it safe.

"SUPPLY-SIDE KEYNESIANISM"

When it comes to economic orthodoxy, the Party of the Church is no more consistent with traditional Republican principles. Although the Republicans claim to be devoted to free markets, most of the big economic interests identified with the party are surprisingly dependent on federal subsidies, protectionism, or both. The most obvious examples are southern growers of cotton, sugar, oranges, and peanuts, and midwestern producers of grain. The Administration is so committed to shielding these interests from global competition that it elected to let the Cancún round of trade negotiations collapse—dealing a significant blow to the prospects for expanded free trade—rather than pressure Congress to reduce U.S. agricultural subsidies. In similar fashion, the Bush Administration supports lavish federal subsidies for a wide range of extractive industries (including oil, gas, and coal) and for cattle ranching.

No assessment of the modern Republican Party would be complete without a discussion of the elaborate mythology of supply-side economics, whose logic has been strained to the breaking point under Bush's watch. The basic supply-side argument is that tax cuts increase the incentive to work, save, and invest, which boosts economic growth. During the Reagan years such logic was used to argue that slashing tax rates would actually increase tax revenues, by producing additional growth—but this has long since been dismissed by mainstream economists and shown false by the record of history. The party also uses supply-side economics to justify tax cuts that are disproportionately skewed in favor of the well-to-do, on the grounds that they are the most likely to save and invest. This argument has always been suspect, and it is even less credible in the aftermath of the technology bubble; the economic woes of the past few years have been due not to lack of investment but, rather, to an excess of capacity.

By sticking with the old supply-side formula—cut taxes as often as possible, especially for the wealthy—Bush has delivered a particularly costly and inefficient stimulus package to help the nation out of its economic downturn. And the Administration seems to recognize as much, given that it has hedged its bets by marrying large supply-side tax cuts with equally large demand-side spending increases, yielding an odd hybrid that might be called "supply-side Keynesianism." This contradictory policy suggests that not even Republicans still believe in the magic of their standard fix. Yet they are not about to abandon the myth. It is far too sacrosanct and convenient an article of faith in the Republican canon.

A major risk in combining moralism and policy, evidently, is that dogma often trumps intellectual honesty. This is particularly clear in the case of official claims that the Administration's overall economic agenda is aimed at helping middle-class families. A more candid articulation of its domestic-policy vision appeared in a June 2003 *Washington Post* op-ed article by Grover Norquist, one of the most influential of conservative strategists. "The new Republican policy is an annual tax cut," Norquist wrote; he predicted that Bush would proceed step by step to abolish estate and capital-gains taxes altogether, to exempt all savings from taxation, and to move the nation to a flat tax on wages only. Implicit in this vision is not only a grand contradiction—cutting taxes while raising spending is unsustainable—but also a significant

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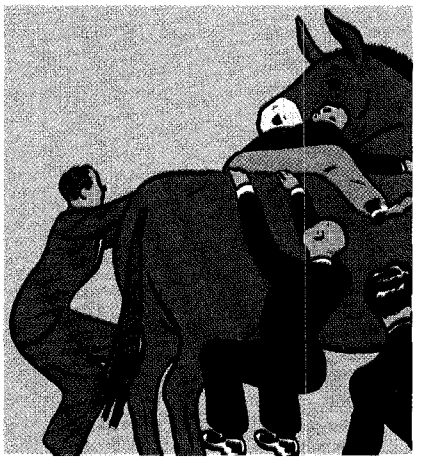
shift in the burden of taxation from the wealthy to the working class and the poor. Apparently the contemporary Republican Party does remain faithful to at least one old conservative belief, which Clinton Rossiter, in his book *Conservatism in America*, described nearly fifty years ago as "the inevitability and necessity of social classes."

THE PARTY OF THE CHIEFTAINS

For its part, the Democratic Party suffers from a different sort of incoherence: plagued by constant squabbling among the interest groups that make up its base, it cannot agree on a clear message or purpose. The sheer breadth of the Democratic coalition is remarkable: it includes organized labor, teachers' and other public employees' unions, environmentalists, racial minorities (especially African-Americans), Hollywood, trial lawyers, the gray lobby, the gay lobby, civil libertarians, pro-choice activists, and a good bit of Wall Street. Although this breadth might seem to be an asset for the Democrats, all these groups are veto-wielding factions when it comes to their respective chunks of the policy turf. This can be downright paralyzing.

If the Republicans are now the Party of the Church, then the Democrats are the Party of the Chieftains. They treat an election almost like a parade: groups that otherwise have little in common come together every year or two, only to return to their niches afterward. The multiplicity of purpose is all the more evident when the party is out of office. During his eight-year presidency Clinton relied on his political skill and charisma—and the benefits of a growing economy—to keep most Democratic factions happy and essentially reading from the same playbook.

When Bush took office, however, the deep tensions among the Democrats resurfaced. For instance, take the relationship between Wall Street and Main Street. Under the New Deal, when U.S. industry was little challenged by competition from abroad, workers and owners of capital managed to reach common ground on a number of issues, from workers' rights to basic benefits. But the subsequent globalization of manufacturing and services led to the collapse of this alliance. Thus whereas Wall Street and some high-tech firms favor financial liberalization, copyright protection, balanced budgets, and a strong dollar (to make imported goods less expensive), working-class Americans want curbs on job flight, tougher international labor standards, strengthened safety nets, and a weaker dollar (to boost exports of the goods they manufacture). The fiercer the global competition, the fiercer the tension between these traditional Democratic camps. The party is just as torn on social issues: Hollywood, members of minorities, and civil libertarians favor identity politics, social liberalism, and



political correctness, whereas this agenda tends to offend the sensibilities of working-class white men.

In the run-up to this year's primaries, the tensions among the Democratic Chieftains have culminated in an all-out struggle for their party's soul, with one camp claiming to represent the "Democratic wing" and another claiming to represent the "electable wing." Although the feuding is over style as well as substance, at least three issues clearly divide left and center: the left is resolutely against the war in Iraq, whereas the center defends it (though averring that it should have been conducted in a more multilateral fashion); the left wants to repeal all Bush's tax cuts, whereas the center favors repealing only some; and the left is wary of unregulated free trade, whereas the center embraces free trade and globalization. In many ways this is a battle over the Clinton legacy. Clintonian centrists fear that the party's new image on welfare, crime, free trade, foreign policy, and fiscal policy—which they worked so hard to establish—will be undermined by a nominee from the party's left.

Fiscal responsibility is another major source of tension within the Democratic Party. Ever since Clinton salvaged the party's credibility in this area, Democrats have tried to build on that new reputation. But those efforts produced two serious problems for the party, one short-term and one longer-term. Over the past three years, while the economy was weak, it may have been a mistake for the Democrats to hew to a policy of fiscal rectitude—especially when it prevented them from thinking creatively about a temporary stimulus package. Maintaining fiscal discipline over the longer term, however, is truly important. Yet it is unclear whether the Democrats will be able to do so given all the programs the various Chieftains are demanding. The race for the Democratic presidential nomination has thrown this conflict into sharp relief. All the contenders cite fiscal prudence as grounds for repealing some or all of Bush's tax cuts—but all then propose to spend the money thus recouped on everything from expanding health insurance to improving schools. From a budgetary perspective there is no difference between decreasing public revenue through tax cuts and increasing public spending through new programs. The Democrats could argue that theirs is a more compassionate form of fiscal irresponsibility (it's better to have health insurance for children than tax cuts for the rich), but they can't argue that they're being any more fiscally responsible than George Bush.

Regardless of who emerges as the Democratic nominee or which camp he hails from, the bulk of his agenda may be disturbingly predictable and backward-looking. Given the power of the Chieftains, it is almost a certainty that the Democratic candidate in 2004 will be against school choice (to appease teachers' unions) and Social Security reform (the gray lobby), and in favor of affirmative action (minorities) and employer-based health care (organized labor). In these and other ways he will be a defender of the status quo. As Al Sharpton recently put it, approvingly, the Democrats are now the true conservatives.

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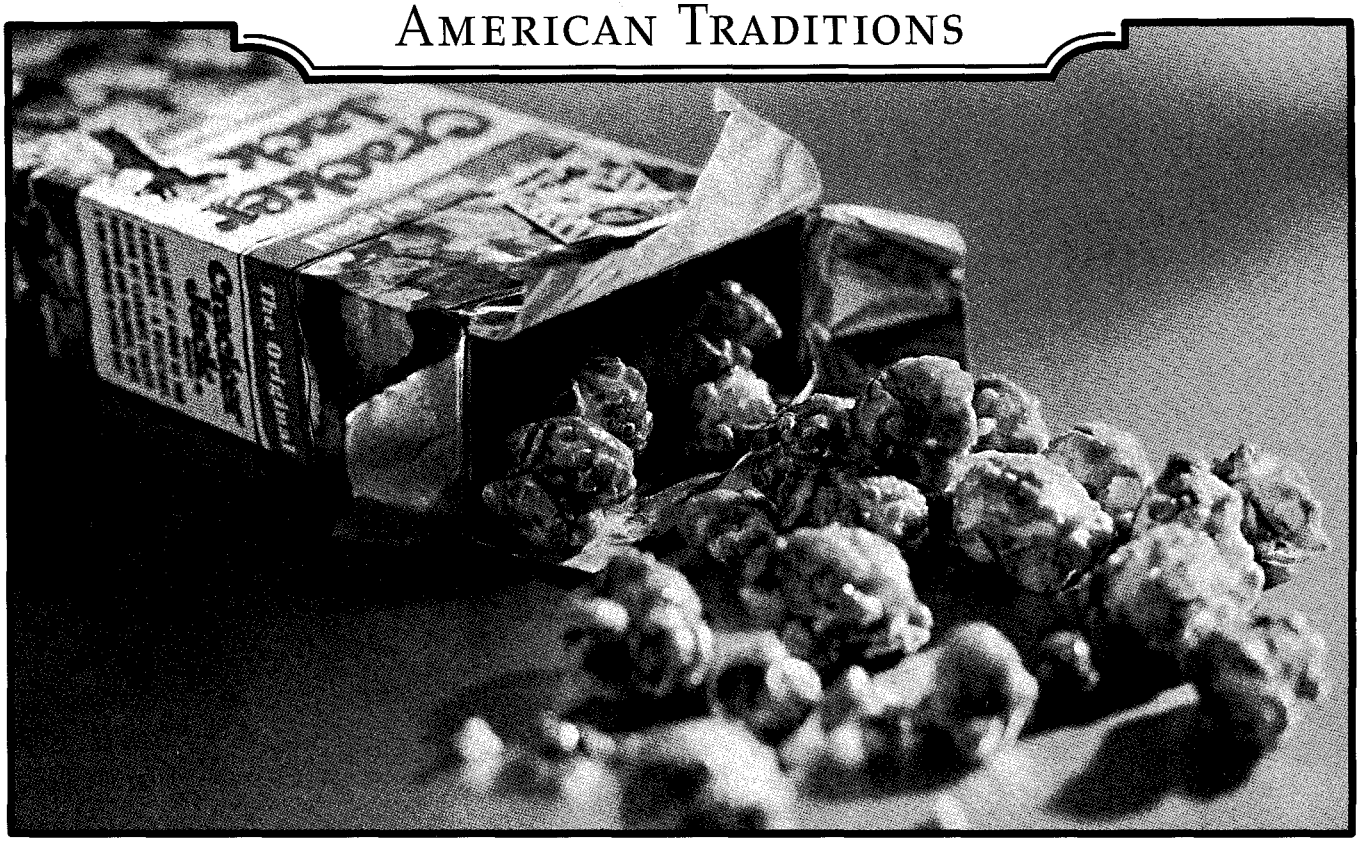

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TRAPPED IN THE PAST

In its legitimate desire to preserve the achievements of the New Deal and the Great Society, the Democratic Party has become trapped in the past, routinely defending antiquated industrial-era programs even when these no longer serve their original ends. George Santayana once defined fanaticism as redoubling your efforts when you have forgotten your aim. Democrats are no fanatics, but they are increasingly guilty of confusing ends and means. Consider employer-based health insurance. The link between health insurance and employment was an accident of history, devised in a bygone era when spending one's working lifetime with a single company was the norm. Now that most Americans change employers every couple of years, does it make sense to rely on a system that forces one to change insurers—or, worse, risk losing coverage—every time? And when it comes to protecting Social Security, the Democrats are waging a battle against immutable demographic forces: a program that originated when working-age Americans far outnumbered retirees cannot remain essentially unchanged in a rapidly aging society.

Underlying this abdication of new thinking is a still more troubling liability: the Party of the Chieftains does not trust the American people to make responsible choices for themselves. Although the Democrats are known as the "pro-choice" party, the kinds of choice they are most eager to defend are in the private realm—reproduction and lifestyle. When it comes to the public sphere (where your child goes to school, or how to invest your Social Security contributions), the Democrats tend to oppose expanding individual choice, largely because some of the leading Chieftains fear that it would weaken their own influence. The Chieftains' reluctance also derives in part from a fear that public programs with more options would undermine equity; but it's possible to devise creative new programs to enhance flexibility and fairness at the same time. Regardless of their reasons, in resisting the expansion of individual choice, a sine qua non of any successful information-age politics, the Democrats have positioned themselves on the wrong side of history.

This inability to advance creative policy solutions hints at yet another problem for the Democrats: the Party of the Chieftains is so busy playing defense that it has forgotten how to play offense. When the Republicans were in the minority during the early Clinton years, they introduced one bold proposal after another—never expecting that these would pass in the short run, but hoping to galvanize the party and set precedents for the future. To a considerable degree this worked. In contrast, the Democrats have spent the past three years turning timidity into an art form, allowing President Bush to set the terms of the debate and confining themselves to criticizing his agenda rather than venturing one of their own. This is the case even in the foreign-policy arena: other than vague calls for multilateralism and diplomacy, it's unclear how a Democratic grand strategy would differ from the President's.

In short, the Democrats have failed utterly to replenish the intellectual capital on which any party's success ultimately hinges. Whereas the Republicans can turn to large, multi-issue think tanks for guidance and inspiration, the Democrats have mainly single-issue groups—environmentalists, civil-rights activists, women's-rights activists—with neither the capacity nor the incentive to forge a greater whole. The flimsiness and Balkanization of the Democratic intellectual infrastructure owes much to the proclivities of progressive philanthropies, which are far more likely to invest in grassroots demonstration programs than in the war of ideas, and which tend to award grants that are strictly limited to particular subject areas, thereby discouraging cross-pollination. Lacking other options, most liberal scholars therefore gravitate to the academy—which actually inhibits them from shaping the public debate. As academic disciplines become ever more specialized, professors are encouraged to publish in esoteric journals—whose only audience is other professors—rather than in the popular press. Whereas conservative scholars have influence far out of proportion to their numbers, liberal scholars have numbers far out of proportion to their influence.

Not only is the Party of the Chieftains at a loss for new ideas, but it lacks a language for defending its core values. In part this is because the Chieftains like to describe their respective constituencies as victims in order to secure concessions from a party that tends to root for the underdog. Republicans, in contrast, are likely to address citizens as if they were all just around the corner from becoming millionaires. This creates a perception that the Republicans are the party of winners and the Democrats the party of losers.

During the Great Depression, when it was painfully obvious that citizens were vulnerable to forces beyond their control, it was easier for a Democratic leader such as FDR to craft a message of collective well-being—that all Americans would be better off if each American were given a helping hand by the government. Nowadays American culture increasingly emphasizes the opposite message: that individuals are to blame for their own problems. Yet the profound dislocations caused by globalization and technological change make the need for an overarching vision of a better society just as urgent as it was in FDR's time.

"The success of a party," Woodrow Wilson claimed, "means little except when the nation is using that party for a large and definite purpose." By this standard both the Party of the Church and the Party of the Chieftains are failures. The Republicans are handicapped by an ideology holding that it is somehow possible to pursue big-spending conservatism at home and an interventionist military program abroad while cutting taxes repeatedly. The Democrats, meanwhile, are paralyzed by the micro-agendas of numerous feuding factions. Both parties wear straitjackets of their own design.

The American people deserve better—and they know it, to judge by the legions of self-described "independents." Fortunately, our major parties are mere vessels; the principles, agendas, and coalitions they contain can vary dramatically from decade to decade. It is just a matter of time, history suggests, until both parties are reinvented. Let us hope they will improve. ▲

Ted Halstead is the founding president and CEO of the New America Foundation.

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[*Governance*]

Nation-Building 101

The chief threats to us and to world order come from weak, collapsed, or failed states. Learning how to fix such states—and building necessary political support at home—will be a defining issue for America in the century ahead

BY FRANCIS FUKUYAMA

"I don't think our troops ought to be used for what's called nation-building. I think our troops ought to be used to fight and win war."
—George W. Bush, October 11, 2000

"We meet here during a crucial period in the history of our nation, and of the civilized world. Part of that history was written by others; *the rest will be written by us* ... Rebuilding Iraq will require a sustained commitment from many nations, including our own: we will remain in Iraq as long as necessary, and not a day more." (italics added)
—George W. Bush, February 26, 2003

The transformation of George W. Bush from a presidential candidate opposed to nation-building into a President committed to writing the history of an entire troubled part of the world is one of the most dramatic illustrations we have of how the September 11 terrorist attacks changed American politics. Under Bush's presidency the United States has taken responsibility for the stability and political development of two Muslim countries—Afghanistan and Iraq. A lot now rides on our ability not just to win wars but to help create self-sustaining democratic political institutions and robust market-oriented economies, and not only in these two countries but throughout the Middle East.

The fact is that the chief threats to us and to world order come today from weak, collapsed, or failed states. Weak or absent government institutions in developing countries form the thread linking terrorism, refugees, AIDS, and global poverty. Before 9/11 the United States felt it could safely ignore chaos in a far-off place like Afghanistan; but the intersection of religious terrorism and weapons of mass destruction has meant that formerly peripheral areas are now of central concern.

Conservatives never approved of the so-called "humanitarian interventions" undertaken during the 1990s, including those in Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia, Kosovo, and East Timor. Liberals, for their part, remain unconvinced by the Bush Administration's rationale for its invasion of Iraq. But whether for reasons of human rights or of security, the United States has done a lot of intervening over the past fifteen years, and has taken on roughly one new nation-building commitment every other year since the end of the Cold War. We have been in denial about it, but we are in this business for the long haul. We'd better get used to it, and learn how to do it—because there will almost certainly be a next time.

Critics of nation-building point out that outsiders can never build nations, if that means creating or repairing all the cultural, social, and historical ties that bind people together as a nation. What we are really talking about is state-building—that is, creating or strengthening such government institutions as armies, police forces, judiciaries, central banks, tax-collection agencies, health and education systems, and the like.

This process has two very separate phases, both of them critical. The first involves stabilizing the country, offering humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, rebuilding the infrastructure, and jump-starting the economy. The second phase begins after stability has been achieved, and consists of creating self-sustaining political and economic institutions that will ultimately permit competent democratic governance and economic growth.

The first of these phases is well understood, and although difficult, it lies within the capability of both the United States and the broader international community. (The United States Agency for International Development has a very spotty record in promoting long-term economic growth but is actually pretty good at delivering humanitarian assistance.) The second phase, the transition to self-sustaining development, is far more challenging; and it is even more important in the long run. The key word is "self-sustaining": unless outside powers are able to leave behind stable, legitimate, relatively uncorrupt indigenous state institutions, they have no hope of a graceful exit.

FAILURE TO ANTICIPATE

What long-term lessons can we draw from the American experience so far in the reconstruction of Iraq? The Bush Administration has been heavily criticized for its failure to plan adequately for the postwar period; but we must remember that nation-building is inherently difficult. If an unexpected problem arises, that does not necessarily mean there was a planning failure, because it is not possible to anticipate every contingency.

Administration officials argue that they did considerable planning for which they don't get credit, because it had to do with contingencies that never arose. Chemical and biological weapons, and also oil-field sabotage and fires, were much discussed before the war. But the Iraqis evidently had no such weapons; and, largely because the country was occupied so fast (the result of a war plan that emphasized lightness and speed over numbers and redundancy), the oil fields were not sabotaged. Before the war some 60 percent of the Iraqi population lived on food donated by the UN World Food Programme, and the Administration worked quietly with that agency to ensure that food would flow to the whole Iraqi population during the war. Extensive plans were made to deal with a major humanitarian or refugee crisis like the one that followed the Gulf War of 1991—but none emerged.

For what, then, can the Administration justly be held accountable? By far the most important oversight was its failure to develop contingency plans against the possibility that the Iraqi state would almost completely collapse. The Administration hoped to decapitate the country's Baathist leadership and al-

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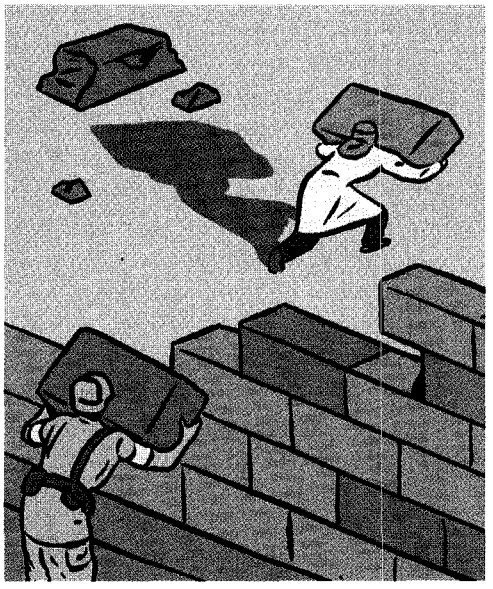
low new leaders to take over quickly. Instead there was a severe breakdown of order, as the army melted away, the police stopped patrolling the streets, and government ministries stopped functioning. The consequences of this disorder were significant: the government's physical infrastructure disappeared, as ministries were stripped of doors, toilets, and wiring and then torched; the search for weapons of mass destruction was compromised by the looting of weapons sites; and many Iraqis' first impression of their "liberation" was one of crime and chaos.

There were precedents for what happened in Iraq—most obviously the aftermath of the U.S. intervention in Panama in 1989, when days of looting and disorder resulted in billions of dollars' worth of damage. Could the Bush Administration, with better foresight, have hedged against the possibility of large-scale chaos in Iraq?

Perhaps. One consequence of the decision to invade the country with a very small force—about 150,000 strong—was that after major combat operations there were simply not enough soldiers to spread around the country. Flooding the zone with forces would have helped. But combat troops are notoriously unprepared to deal with civil disturbances and police functions, and often make things worse through the heavy-handed use of force. The United States does not maintain a national police force for use in such situations; the only option would have been to bring in follow-on peacekeeping or constabulary forces such as Italian *carabinieri*, Canadian peacekeepers, or the Spanish Guardia Civil.

But before we assume that a multilateral approach would have prevented looting in Iraq, we should recall that earlier multilateral missions, to deploy police forces in Haiti, Somalia, Bosnia, and Kosovo, were poorly organized and understaffed, and in most cases arrived too late to perform their functions when they were most needed. It is not likely that a slow-moving international police force would have made much difference. The Italians did eventually send the *carabinieri* to Iraq, but they arrived long after the looting had subsided.

America's involvement in nation-building over the past fifteen years has yielded some significant knowledge about organizing for the task, as a recent study by the RAND Corporation demonstrates. But the Bush Administration failed to draw on this institutional knowledge. Its most serious planning mistakes were to set up its postwar-reconstruction organization at the last minute, to endow it with insufficient authority, and to put it under the overall control of the Pentagon, which did not have the capacity to do the job properly. The result was an organization that, instead of hitting the ground running after the end of major combat, wasted precious weeks and months building its own capabilities.



Sometime in August of 2002 President Bush signed the executive order that put in train final military planning for the war, and U.S. forces began deploying to the Persian Gulf toward the end of the year. But not until January 20 of last year was Jay Garner, a retired lieutenant general, appointed to coordinate the new Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance. He had less than two months to pull together the planning efforts of various U.S. agencies before the ORHA was relocated to Kuwait, on March 17, at the start of the war. The ORHA went from a staff of six and a phoneless office in the Pentagon in late January to an organization with a staff of 700 just three months later—an impressive feat of institutional creation by any standard. Nevertheless, since the State Department, USAID, the CIA, and the Army War College had prepared extensive plans for the postwar period, the question remains why the Administration did not seek to integrate their recommendations into a coordinated process as soon as the war planning began (see "Blind Into Baghdad," page 52).

There was, moreover, a serious problem of authority. Garner, who had led humanitarian relief efforts in Kurdistan after the Gulf War, was a former three-star general, and thus not in a position to give orders to the four-star CENTCOM Commander Tommy Franks. Garner was succeeded in mid-May by Ambassador L. Paul Bremer, a very senior foreign-service officer and counterterrorism expert who now heads the Coalition Provisional Authority, the successor to the ORHA. Bremer was far more visible and well known back in Washington—an insider who could command much more authority than Garner could.

The unfortunate public perception is that Garner was replaced for having presided over a chaotic and disorganized reconstruction effort. In fact he did an amazing job under the circumstances. It had been the Bush Administration's plan all along to replace Garner with a more distinguished and visible administrator; so why wasn't Bremer, or someone of his stature, in place before the beginning of the war?

The Administration has argued that it could not have begun coordinated postwar planning in the fall of 2002, because it was still seeking the approval of the international community for the war. This argument is disingenuous: the President clearly signaled that he would proceed with or without the approval of the international community, and did not wait for the United Nations before deploying military forces to the Gulf—a deployment that, like Von Moltke's railroad schedules in July of 1914, could not easily be reversed. In reality, the late planning and weak command were rooted in a series of interagency battles that took place in the fall of 2002.

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BIG IDEA, BIG FIGHT

The first phase of nation-building—post-conflict reconstruction—is extremely difficult to implement, because the necessary capabilities are widely spread out among a host of government and civilian agencies. Earlier nation-building exercises suffered from poor coordination, both within the U.S. government and within the broader international community. In Bosnia, for example, the Dayton Accords gave military authority to NATO, whereas civil authority was divided among the Office of the High Representative, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. Some functions, including the creation of an international police force, fell through the cracks. Within the U.S. government the military clashed with civilian agencies over its role in noncombat missions such as demobilization and policing.

The U.S. officials involved learned some important lessons during the 1990s, which the Clinton Administration codified in Presidential Decision Directive 56, in May of 1997. PDD 56 established an interagency framework for coordinating the U.S. response to post-conflict emergencies, and was used during the reconstruction of Kosovo following the 1999 NATO intervention there. Owing in part to the better U.S. coordination, the nation-building effort in Kosovo was much better organized on an international level than the one in Bosnia, with greater unity of command and considerably quieter interagency squabbles.

At the beginning of the Bush Administration, efforts were made to replace PDD 56 with a new directive that would have put the White House's National Security Council staff in charge of coordinating any nation-building activities. By all accounts this was a sensible idea, but the President never signed the draft, apparently because of persistent objections from the Defense Department. Then came September 11, the Afghan war, and the ensuing reconstruction effort. The Bush Administration still had no agreed-upon policy framework for nation-building, and many officials regarded the reconstruction effort in Afghanistan as a fiasco.

This was the background against which the Pentagon put forth, shortly after passage of UN Security Council Resolution 1441, in November of 2002, its "big idea" that all postwar planning should be centralized under its own control. The delay in the appointment of a reconstruction coordinator was due to the big fight that ensued from the big idea.

- **THE CHIEF THREATS TO SECURITY COME FROM FAILED STATES.**
- **AMERICAN INTERESTS DICTATE THAT WE TEACH OTHER PEOPLES TO GOVERN THEMSELVES.**
- **THE UNITED STATES MUST CREATE A PERMANENT NATION-BUILDING AGENCY.**

Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld had some serious reasons for wanting to retain control over the reconstruction effort. Previous nation-building exercises had always had two chains of command, one dealing with military security and the other—through the local ambassador and the State Department—with civil affairs. In Rumsfeld's view, this split authority tied down U.S. forces, because the civilian chain of command could never agree on an exit strategy and was constantly calling on the military to do things for which it was not prepared, such as police work. This problem, according to Rumsfeld, was particularly acute in Bosnia, where U.S. forces were still deployed seven years after the signing of the Dayton Accords, and it had emerged in Afghanistan after the United States ousted the Taliban.

Meanwhile, the Pentagon had been fighting for months with the State Department and the intelligence community over the role of Ahmed Chalabi and the Iraqi National Congress. At the extremes were those in the Pentagon who believed that the democratization of Iraq could be delegated entirely to Chalabi, and those in the State Department and the intelligence community who thought him unfit for any role in postwar Iraq.

By late December of 2002 Rumsfeld, the consummate bureaucratic infighter, had prevailed. President Bush agreed to give control to the Pentagon because the idea of a unified command appealed to him. But this strategy had distinct disadvantages: the Pentagon, which lacked the institutional knowledge or capacity to do many of the things that need to be done in reconstruction, did not turn to the right places. The Defense Department does not have any particular expertise in writing constitutions or in producing attractive TV programs to compete with al-Jazeera and al-Arabiya for the hearts and minds of Arab viewers. It does not have good relations with the international NGOs that provide humanitarian services; nor does it have a way of coordinating activities with the UN and other multilateral institutions.

Once it became clear that the reconstruction of Iraq was going to be far costlier and longer than expected, there were immediate calls in Congress for international help. But although such help would be welcomed by American taxpayers, the international community is no better coordinated for nation-building than the U.S. government.

To begin with, no central authority exists within the international community to lead nation-building efforts. Much as other countries might like to give this responsibility to the United Nations, that is not a practical solution. The UN does not have the expertise or the resources, human and otherwise, to run nation-building programs authoritatively. For these it depends on the heavyweight funders—namely, the United States, the European Union, and, to a lesser extent, Japan.

Moreover, no one has solved the more serious problem of how to implement the second phase of nation-building—the transition to self-sustaining indigenous institutions. As the human-rights expert Michael Ignatieff memorably put it, whereas the mantra of the international community is "capacity building," the reality is often "capacity sucking-out," as

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well-endowed international agencies, contractors, and NGOs arrive with their cell phones, laptops, and First World salaries. In a recent article in the *Journal of Democracy*, Gerald Knaus and Felix Martin argue that Bosnia seven years after the Dayton Accords has become a "European Raj," in which the High Representative acts as a viceroy presiding over a colonial dependency that is without either democracy or self-government. Neither there nor in Kosovo is an exit strategy evident, because the departure of the international community would leave both places with the intractable political problems that led to intervention in the first place.

None of this means that the United States should exclude the international community from future nation-building exercises. Multilateralism means the difference between the $70 billion contributed by foreign powers to pay for the Gulf War and the $13 billion they have pledged for reconstruction this time around. The international community can provide constabulary forces, water engineers, land-mine-removal experts, and other resources that the United States often cannot field quickly. What is needed is a standing U.S. government office to cooperate with this community, with an eye to the long lead times that are inevitable.

NEW APPROACHES

The Bush Administration's experience in Iraq does not teach new lessons about nation-building but, rather, reinforces some old ones that have been forgotten. The first is that nation-building is a difficult, long-term enterprise with high costs in manpower, lives, and resources. The places where it has been most successful—Germany, Japan, and the Philippines—are ones where U.S. forces have remained for generations. We should not get involved to begin with if we are not willing to pay those high costs.

That being said, we are now fully committed in Afghanistan and Iraq, and are likely to take on other nation-building commitments in the future, simply because the failed-state problem is one that we cannot safely ignore. It therefore behooves us to draw some lessons from our recent experience.

The problems that the Administration faced in Iraq were not so much the results of specific misjudgments as the predictable by-products of the Administration's poorly thought-out institutional structure. Fixing that structure would involve at least four things.

First, the United States needs to create a central authority, backed by a permanent staff, to manage ongoing and future nation-building activities. One possibility, recommended by the Commission on Post-conflict Reconstruction of the Center for Strategic and International Studies, is to appoint a director of reconstruction. The director could be located in any of a number of places in the government, though the White House would be the most logical, given the delicate interagency relationships involved. (Recognizing that it had been a mistake to grant the Pentagon primacy over the reconstruction of Iraq, the White House staff moved to take back that authority in October of 2003.) The director's office would serve as a fund of institutional memory, so that we would not have to perpetually run around teaching ourselves what we already knew.

Second, this coordinating office must be endowed with sufficient authority to bring the government's warring agencies under control when a crisis emerges. That means a civilian equivalent of the CENTCOM commander should be appointed to take charge of postwar civil planning, coincident with and on a par with military planning.

Third, any standing organization devoted to nation-building should maintain ties with similar agencies in other countries. Although the international community has—through efforts in Somalia, Bosnia, and East Timor—gotten better at nation-building, it, too, lacks the means for preserving institutional memory, and could use American help.

Finally, the reconstruction effort must remain under clear civilian control as it moves from the first stage, stabilizing the region, to the second stage, creating self-sustaining institutions that will ultimately allow the United States a graceful exit. Decisions about how rapidly to turn over authority to local actors, what the sequence for political reform should be, and when and how to reduce aid levels and presence in a country cannot be left to the Department of Defense, which will always be biased in favor of a quick exit.

This bias will be of particular importance as the reconstruction of Iraq progresses. Donald Rumsfeld has articulated a strategy of nation-building "lite," involving a rapid transition to local control and a tough-love policy that leaves locals to find their own way toward good government and democracy. This is a dubious approach, at least if one cares about the final outcome. The new Iraqi government will be administratively weak and not regarded by its citizens as fully legitimate. It will be plagued by corruption and mismanagement, and riven by internal disagreements—witness the fight between the Iraqi Governing Council's Shia and non-Shia members over how to draft a new constitution. Nation-building requires a lot more than training police and military forces to take over from the United States: unless such forces are embedded in a strong framework of political parties, a judiciary, a civilian administration, and a rule of law, they will become mere pawns in the internal struggle for power. Nation-building "lite" risks being used as an intellectual justification for getting out, regardless of the mess we leave behind.

A standing U.S. government office to manage nation-building will be a hard sell politically, because we are still unreconciled to the idea that we are in the nation-building business for the long haul. However, international relations is no longer just a game played between great powers but one in which what happens inside smaller countries can have a huge effect on the rest of the world. Our "empire" may be a transitional one grounded in democracy and human rights, but our interests dictate that we learn how better to teach other people to govern themselves.

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BOOKS & CRITICS

THIS MONTH:

The Acutest Ear in Paris
"If I were asked to 'summarize' the achievement of Proust, I should reply as dauntlessly as I dared that his is the work par excellence that exposes and clarifies the springs of human motivation. Through his eyes we see what actuates the dandy and the lover and the grandee and the hypocrite and the poseur, with a transparency unexampled except in Shakespeare or George Eliot." Christopher Hitchens evaluates Lydia Davis's new translation of *Swann's Way*
PAGE 171

Do As I Say
"She's a fishwife and a bit of a kook, a woman given to comically dramatic changes of heart and habit, but Dr. Laura gives some of the best advice about marriage and family life available on the radio, or perhaps anywhere in popular American culture." Caitlin Flanagan reviews *The Proper Care and Feeding of Husbands*, by Dr. Laura Schlessinger
PAGE 182

High Plains Drifter
"I wasn't especially looking forward to my second reading of the work—so shopworn, at this point, was much of my existing mental Quixote imagery (think cheap Picasso posters, *Man of La Mancha*, a groggy Frank Sinatra singing 'The Impossible Dream'). But the book quite staggered me with its charm, beauty, and profundity." Terry Castle reviews a new translation, by Edith Grossman, of Cervantes's *Don Quixote*
PAGE 185

NEW & NOTEWORTHY

Why we review the books we do

BY BENJAMIN SCHWARZ

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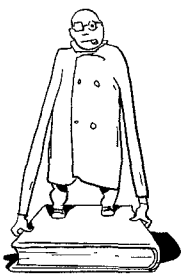
Readers often puzzle over why a certain book or subject is ignored in this section while another is written about; or they discern—or think they discern—certain predilections in our coverage. Periodically we make explicit our prejudices, preferences, and aims. This section, like the magazine as a whole, seeks to discriminate. Our readers are bombarded with information every day, and more books are published in a week than most of our readers could get through in a year. We want to tell them which titles shouldn't be missed, which are unjustly neglected, and which we think should be ignored, though they may be widely praised elsewhere.

Although in some ways constraining, discrimination also liberates us. We assume that our readers look to this section as a critical organ rather than a news source—which means that unlike, say, *The New York Times Book Review*, we don't have to cover the waterfront. For example, we chose not to review Pat Barker's latest, because although she's an important novelist we admire, her most recent book happens to be very far from her best effort. Its review, we reasoned, would be unfavorable but, since it would also point to her obvious talent, would hardly be an evisceration; in other words, it would almost necessarily be equivocal and boring (that good novelists so often produce less than stellar novels largely accounts for the fact that fiction reviews are so often politely qualified and, well, dull). Instead, because life is short and one's reading time considerably shorter, we want to draw readers' attention to the best books, regardless of (original) publication date, which is why we review a fair number of reissues. We assume that readers want to know about Modern Library's new edition of George Gissing's previously all but unobtainable *New Grub Street*, for example, and Vintage's reprints of Somerset Maugham's novels—and not just what's of the moment. In fact, we think readers would rather hear about, say, Yale's reissue of Jerome Carcopino's vivid but scholarly *Daily Life in Ancient Rome* than about Thomas Cahill's widely reviewed, formulaic, and patched-together *Sailing the Wine-Dark Sea: Why the Greeks Matter*.



Gissing and Maugham are English, of course, and some readers think they detect an Anglocentrism in our books coverage, especially in our fiction reviews. This charge of parochialism is half right. We tend to focus on prose style in our assessment of fiction. It's obviously

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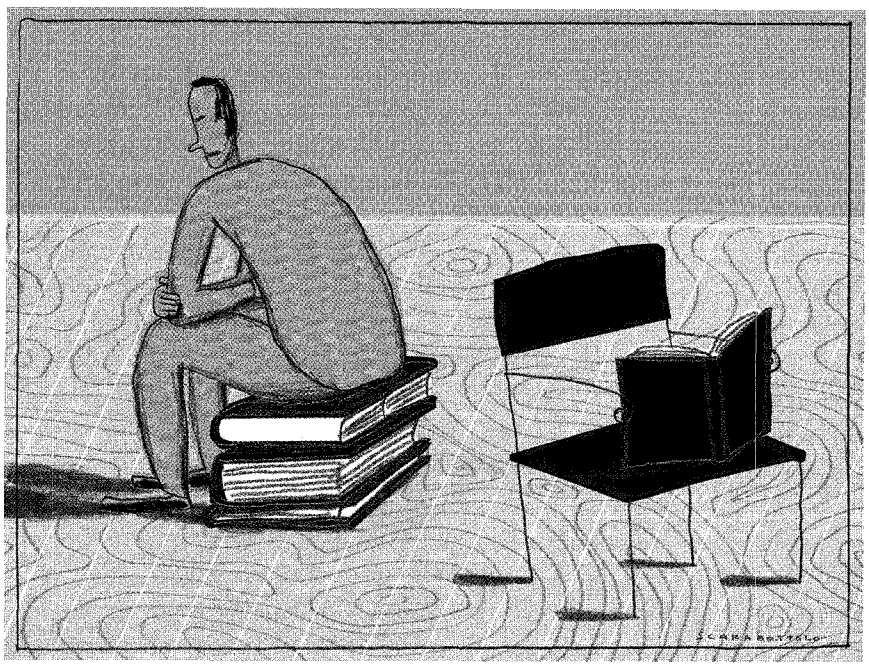
far more difficult to do so when reviewing literature in translation, because both the reviewer and the reader of a work encounter not the author's writing but the translator's rendering of it. Hence we run fewer pieces on translated works than do comparable book-review sections (although the essays on Proust and Cervantes in this issue testify to our attentiveness to major new translations of essential works). And we're therefore particularly interested in books written originally in English—by British novelists but also by American, Canadian, and Australian authors—and especially mindful of the influences and echoes spanning centuries among writers in this language. But one aesthetic penchant does militate in favor of British writers specifically: we prefer wit, wryness, and detachment to zeal. Whereas didactic blather and a pedantic spirit still infect too much American fiction, we find that British authors often write with the kind of insouciant precision we prize (as does an American writer such as Lorrie Moore).

If we run more than the predictable number of reviews of novels composed in English, we run fewer than the predictable number of reviews of books on politics, public policy, and current affairs. This is partly because we assiduously cover these areas in other parts of the magazine, but mostly because a very high proportion of these titles are just godawful. (I write this as someone who once made his living as a foreign-policy analyst.) Magazine and journal articles are usually the best forum for bold and original arguments on these subjects; most books on them tend to have (at best) a kernel of an important idea, padded with superfluous case studies and second-rate reporting. But we do ferret out those titles that present important arguments, especially titles ignored in the public discourse, and we also focus on some titles that we believe distort current debate or receive unwarranted praise. In this regard we would cite the review we ran of *Germs*, a book that we believed hyped the bioterrorism threat. It was published just after 9/11, and was widely reviewed during the subsequent anthrax scare; in fact, its arguments helped shape how that story was covered. Most reviewers lauded the book, and particularly praised the authors' prescience. We asked Bruce Hoffman, an unusually judicious terrorism expert, to assess it. His contrarian review trenchantly pointed out the book's fundamental flaws; briefly, persuasively, and sharply made a case that local and national authorities were devoting too much attention to the wrong sort of terrorist threats; and proved to be correct.

Readers sometimes note that we tend to run pieces that are either unusually short or unusually long compared with those in other review sections. As for the short ones, we're convinced that important and praiseworthy titles can be reviewed analytically, with verve, and even definitively in much less space than other book sections usually allot. We strive to make these short pieces read like mini-essays, tightly argued and with a strong point of view, rather than like capsule summaries. In our fiction reviews we eschew plot summary; we think novels should be elegantly characterized, not recapitulated. This approach gives the reviewer, even in a short piece, room to place the book in a larger context, be it of the author's body of work or of trends in fiction. As for the long pieces, we're trying to nurture and revive the stylish, critical, often saucy and disputatious review-essay, because we believe that from Macaulay through Virginia Woolf to Edmund Wilson, Dwight Macdonald, and Gore Vidal it's proved to be a form perfectly suited to discussing complex ideas with grace and flair, and to taking the pulse of the contemporary intellectual and cultural scene. In such pieces we might cover traditional subjects (canonical writers, historiographical debates), but we're aiming also to restore what Orwell (in describing his own work) called "semi-sociological literary criticism." We'll occasionally examine hugely popular (or widely discussed) novels and nonfiction books to assess the social, economic, and commercial roots and contexts of literary phenomena. More often we'll use this form to explore what are often dismissed as lifestyle subjects. In bookstores frequented by *Atlantic* readers whole sections are devoted to titles that chronicle, or offer advice about, the way the professional class lives now—its anxieties and obsessions; what its members spend their money and time on; what they talk about on dates and after dates, at dinner parties, and on the sidelines during their kids' soccer practice. The books' subjects range from college admissions to family life; from competition in the workplace to creating a home life; from courtship, sex, and marriage to homework, raising kids, and the problems facing teenage girls. We believe that these



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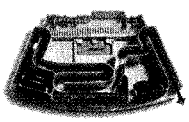

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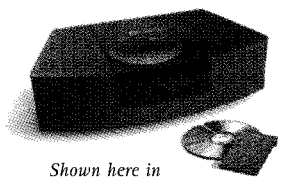

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issues—together with the way they're framed and defined by the books people read—should be the subject of discerning, sympathetic, occasionally tart cultural criticism.

And while we mix short and long, we also mix low and high. To take a piece in this issue, for example, we think a book by an author and polemicist as popular as Dr. Laura demands to be discussed seriously. But we also find that too many nonfiction books that would once have been characterized as middlebrow—popular history and historical biography most prominently—garner too easy praise and get too much attention in serious general book-review sections at the expense of significant, sometimes pathbreaking semi-academic books. We take the opposite approach: We might ignore, say, David McCullough's biography of John Adams—not because it's a bad book but because we assume that our readers already know about it and because we have nothing fresh to say about it or its subject. We want, however, to inform our readers about, and to explain the significance of, complexly argued and unfairly ignored books such as (to pick two recent U.S. history titles) Allen C. Guelzo's biography of Lincoln and E. Brooks Holifield's *Theology in America*.

LITERARY STUDIES

ROSAMOND LEHMANN, *by Selina Hastings* (Vintage UK/Trafalgar Square). The English novelist Rosamond Lehmann (1901–1990) wrote a few splendid and in this country largely forgotten novels about the interior and intensely romantic lives of lower-upper-middle-class women. (By far the best of these are the satiric yet empathic *Invitation to the Waltz* and its anguished sequel, *The Weather in the Streets*.) A member of that characteristically British tribe of mid-twentieth-century high-second-tier female authors that includes Sylvia Townsend Warner, Ivy Compton-Burnett, Elizabeth Bowen, Sybille Bedford, and Rose Macaulay, Lehmann wrote fewer superb books than most of them, but she amply deserves this nearly 500-page biography because of her own intensely romantic life. She was what was once termed unlucky in love, and also what is now termed emotionally needy—voraciously so. Lehmann had a knack for choosing the absolutely wrong man, again and again. Her first husband, a remarkably immature son of a shipping magnate, had a pathological fear of impregnating her ("Our sex life," Lehmann recalled, "was a disgrace to sex"); sure enough, upon learning she was pregnant, he insisted she get an abortion, after which he congratulated her on once again being "all clear & clean inside." Quite understandably, she soon embarked on an affair, and she subsequently married her lover, the silly, rich, and equally immature Wogan Philipps. But after the birth of her first child she found the idea of sexual relations with Philipps repulsive, and soon both she and he were unfaithful. After a passionate but short liaison with the caddish Goronwy Rees (the affair ended when she read in *The Times* of his engagement to another woman, of whom she'd never heard; he would later be immortalized as the devious Eddy in Bowen's *The Death of the Heart*), she started her "tremendous affair" with the love of her life, the poet Cecil Day Lewis. *He* was an uber-cad. That things would not go well with him Lehmann should perhaps have surmised from the fact that soon before meeting her, Day Lewis—a married man with two children—had a son (whom he would never acknowledge) by the wife of a local farmer. Weak and improvident, Day Lewis vacillated between his wife and Lehmann for nine years before abandoning both for a younger actress. Lehmann never recovered from that betrayal, and her despair was compounded eight years later when her daughter, "the one flawless joy of my life," died of polio at twenty-four. But in this portrait, at once acerbic and compassionate, gossipy and astute, Hastings balances sympathy and judgment: the men Lehmann picked may have been lousy, but she herself was a demanding and histrionically self-absorbed lover; one of her closest friends acknowledged that being the object of her overwrought romantic attention was "like being suffocated by a great eiderdown of rose petals." And she only grew needier and more smothering to friends and lovers (the latter were more and more the product of her increasingly pathetic, vain imagination) as her famous beauty faded. Born the day after Queen Victoria's funeral, Lehmann died lionized by late-twentieth-century feminists, and throughout her adult life she moved fluently among Britain's literary, social, and political elites (the book's supporting cast ranges from Virginia Woolf to Noël Coward to the head of MI6; in a convoluted familial connection typical of that set, Lehmann's second husband married Hastings's father's first wife). This rich and compelling work reveals as much about that peculiarly intertwined world as it does about the peculiarly unhappy romantic fortunes of an intensely sensitive—some might choose to say brittle—woman.

HISTORY

THE COMING OF THE THIRD REICH, *by Richard J. Evans* (Penguin Press). Three British historians have recently written commanding and lasting chronicles of the Third Reich. In 2000 Ian Kershaw completed his two-volume *Hitler*—a masterpiece of academic biography, which perhaps will never be superseded—and Michael Burleigh published his one-volume narrative of Germany under the Nazis, the best scholarly general history of the subject until now. Evans, Professor of Modern History at Cambridge (he was the utterly convincing, if prickly and pedantic, scholar whose testimony thwarted the libel suit of the notorious David Irving), has published the first of a projected three volumes that when finished will long remain the definitive English-language account. Although Burleigh's history is written with more flair, it lacks the scope and depth of Evans's, which probes far more fully into social, economic, labor, cultural, and legal matters. And whereas Burleigh took a self-conscious and distracting condemnatory approach (one would have thought a degree of moral agreement had already been reached regarding the Nazis), Evans's tone is cool, and hence far more authoritative. But his book is not without flaws. This volume ends in mid-1933, just after the

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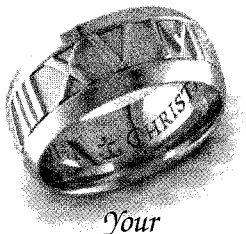

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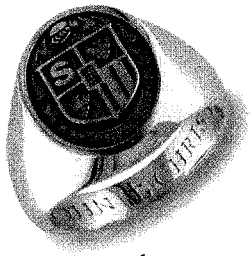

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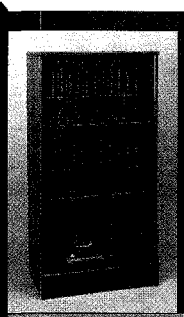

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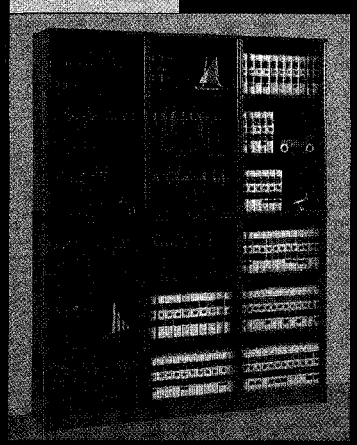

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Nazis crushed the opposition political parties, abolished the trade unions, cowed their conservative sometime allies, and brought the churches to heel—and Evans confirms Burleigh's emphasis on the central role played by the Nazis' skillful deployment of street violence and political terror in engendering popular compliance and in preparing the ground for the Nazification of all aspects of German life. But whereas this portion of his work is both gripping and precise, the opening sections —the book's first 150 pages—are diffuse and intellectually lazy. In these chapters, devoted to historical background, Evans catalogues such topics as the history of German anti-Semitism; the religious, regional, and class differences that divided Bismarck's Germany; the Weimar Republic's structural political weaknesses; and culture, the arts, and public morals in the 1920s. But he fails to link them with exactitude to the subject of his book—the rise of Nazism. The extent to which Hitler and the Nazis were a natural or even an inevitable outgrowth of forces embedded in German history and society is, of course, a subject of perennial debate, and Evans can't really be faulted for failing to come up with a definitive interpretation. But by letting the facts merely sit on the page, with almost no attempt to interpret, shape, and dissect them, he essentially throws up his hands; these flabby chapters mar the work as a whole, and they clash with Evans's crisp, analytical, meticulously argued history, which emerges as soon as Hitler and the Nazis enter the story. (Evans's closing chapter, in which he assesses both the extent and the limits of the Nazis' electoral success and, concomitantly, Hitler's use of both law and thuggery in establishing a one-party state, is as bracingly intelligent a historical analysis as I've read.) An always reliable, often magisterial synthesis of a vast body of scholarship, and a frequently deft blend of narrative and interpretation, Evans's book is an impressive achievement. If in his subsequent volumes he avoids the laxness that vitiates this one, his opus will be one of the major historical works of our time. ▲

Benjamin Schwarz is the literary editor of The Atlantic

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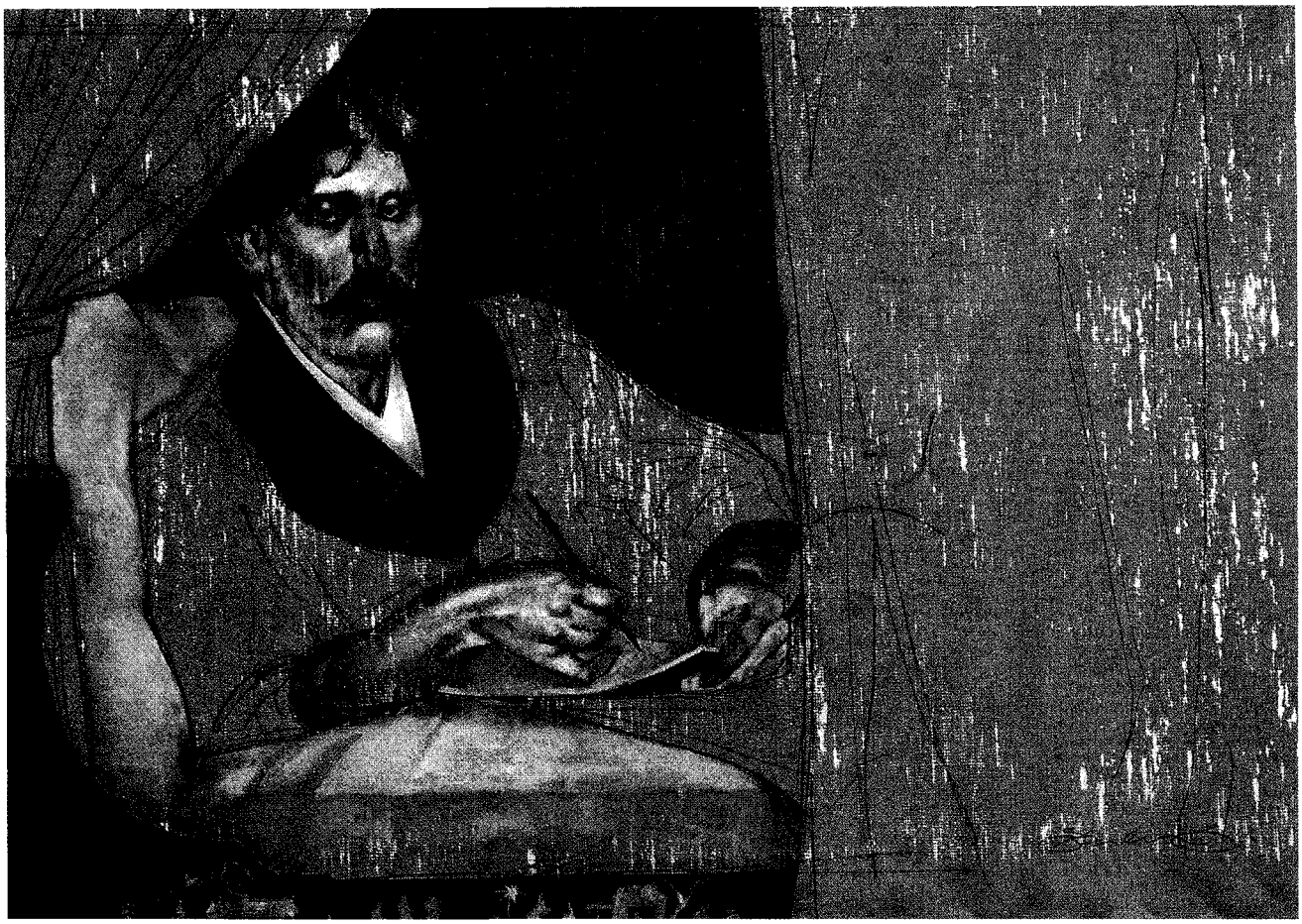

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BOOKS

THE ACUTEST EAR IN PARIS

To be so perceptive and yet so innocent—that, in a phrase, is the achievement of Proust

BY CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS

.....

I have not been able to discover whether there exists a precise French equivalent for the common Anglo-American expression "killing time." It's a very crass and breezy expression, when you ponder it for a moment, considering that time, after all, is killing us. Marcel Proust was the man who, by contemplating in a way that transcended the moment, attempted to interpenetrate these two forbidding alternatives.

SWANN'S WAY
by Marcel Proust
translated by Lydia Davis
Viking

When the Monty Python gang acted out its "Summarize Proust" competition, one of the contestant teams, a madrigal group, was cut off abruptly by the master of ceremonies before it had got beyond the opening stave of *Swann's Way*. One can readily appreciate the difficulty; yet if I were asked to "summarize" the achievement of Proust, I should reply as dauntlessly as I dared that his is the work par excellence that exposes and clarifies the springs of human motivation. Through his eyes we see what actuates the dandy and the lover and the grandee and the hypocrite and the poseur, with a transparency unexampled except in Shakespeare or George Eliot. And this ability, so piercing and at times even alarming, is not mere knowingness. It is not, in other words, the product of cynicism. To be so perceptive and yet so innocent—that, in a phrase, is the achievement of Proust. It is also why one does well to postpone a complete reading until one is in the middle of life, and has shared some of the disillusionments and fears, as well as the delights, that come with this mediocre actuarial accomplishment. Because plainly, along with being "about" social climate and fashion, and the countryside versus the city, and sexual inversion and also Jewishness, with *l'affaire* Dreyfus one of the binding and constitutive elements in its narrative, Proust's novel ("the novel form," he wrote in one letter, is the form from which "it departs least") is all about time. And one does not fully appreciate this aspect until one has learned something of how time is rationed, and of how this awful and apparently inexorable dole may conceivably be cheated. The foregoing is intended as a word of encouragement. Proust can be regained, even if—in the very long run—time itself cannot.

My introduction to *A la recherche du temps perdu* came by way of Terence Kilmartin, who died in 1991, roughly a decade after completing his retranslation of C. K. Scott Moncrieff's original English rendering. Kilmartin was, as

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well as a translator, an editor of considerable verve and decision. He made the book pages of the London *Observer* into a necessary weekly resource for the literate—an infinitely elastic "section" in which more seemed to get itself discussed than the allotted space could conceivably permit. To give you an idea of Kilmartin's panache: I was once told by Gore Vidal that after turning in his first review to the Kilmartin regime, he received a telephone call from Kilmartin informing him that the piece had had to be shortened by half a dozen lines. Exigency at the printer's had meant that this pruning had been executed by the editor himself. "Oh, no you don't, Mr. Kilmartin," said an irate Vidal, shortly before replacing the receiver with a bang. "Nobody cuts my stuff except me. I shall not be contributing to your pages again." When he later seized that Sunday's offending *Observer* in a foul frame of mind, Vidal found that he could not tell where (or how) the excisions had been made. After duly going to Canossa, he gave Kilmartin full power of attorney.

Kilmartin wrote a highly amusing and illuminating account of his experience as a Proust revisionist, which appeared in the first issue of Ben Sonnenberg's quarterly *Grand Street* in the autumn of 1981. The essay opened with a kind of encouragement: "There used to be a story that discerning Frenchmen preferred to read Marcel Proust in English on the grounds that the prose of *A la recherche du temps perdu* was deeply un-French and heavily influenced by English writers such as Ruskin." I cling to this even though Kilmartin thought it to be ridiculous Parisian snobbery; I shall never be able to read Proust in French, and one's opportunities for outfacing Gallic self-regard are relatively scarce. It seems to be the case, at all events, that Scott Moncrieff aroused a possessive instinct in the French. He published his translation of *Swann's Way* just as Proust was dying, in 1922, and by the time of his own death, in 1930, had made the work into something like a vogue or a cult in the Anglophone universe. (He did not live to undertake *Le temps retrouvé*, which was Englished by other hands.) For decades Proust was eclipsed in France, first by surrealism, next by *la littérature engagée*, and then by the existentialists. Not until the 1950s, with the advent of André Maurois's *A la recherche de Marcel Proust*, did French literary opinion decide to reclaim Proust, and was the celebrated Pléiade edition published. This event in its turn began to generate concern among English-speaking Proustians that their treasured translation might not be quite up to standard, which meant that French precedence had been restored and that —in Cartesian terms, at least—reason had regained her Parisian throne.

When I was quite young, I often made the trip between suburban North Oxford and the wooded grounds of Blenheim Palace, in Woodstock. At some stage of my boyhood I was told that the Oxford-to-Woodstock distance was ten miles, and to this day, if at the end of any tiring journey I see a road sign indicating the remaining distance to be ten miles, I instantly feel that I am almost home. I am sure that everybody has a similar mnemonic prompting, and Marcel Proust wrote the book, so to speak, about mnemonic devices. But the distance to be traversed between, or as between, the Swann and the Meseglise and the Guermantes "ways" is measured also in metaphysics. Kilmartin thought a good deal about the responsibility this entailed. He didn't cite Hegel's famous observation about the Owl of Minerva taking wing only as its surroundings turn crepuscular, but he did realize that "the complexities of the opening pages of the novel are especially difficult to decipher without the hindsight provided by the later volumes."

> I myself noticed too late (after the new version had gone to press) that in the paragraph evoking the bedroom at Tansonville *la chambre où je me serai endormi* had become in English "the bedroom in which I shall presently fall asleep" (instead of "in which I must have fallen asleep"), thus giving the reader the impression that the narrator is writing at Tansonville instead of in Paris some years after.

A similar *bêtise*—this time caught by Kilmartin—had altered the spatio-temporal significance of Swann's jealous questioning of Odette. He demands to be told, of her possible lesbian encounters, *"Il y a combien de temps?"* Perhaps to an extent giving away his own proclivities, Scott Moncrieff made this into "How many times?" instead of "How long ago?" Even my French would be equal to that, as it would have been on the occasions when Scott Moncrieff, astonishingly, gave *actuel* as "actual." If only the present and the actual were indeed the same. But what's the occasional *faux ami* between real friends?

I think I am not wrong about Scott Moncrieff's tendencies; he was well attuned to the gay vernacular, and his translation of "*ce 'chichi' voulu*" as "this deliberate camping" is held by experts to be the first use of the expression in print. However, his youthfulness relative to Proust might furnish a clue to a certain insouciance about time and its passage, of the sort that I mentioned previously. The very first sentence of the novel, *"Longtemps je me suis couché de bonne heure,"* may very well be, as Kilmartin suggested, "deliberately ambiguous; it leaves the reader in a state of uncertainty as to the narrator's position in time." The chosen tense is the *passé composé*, or past perfect, but the imperfect keeps obtruding as the paragraph lengthens, and Kilmartin expressed frustration with the manner in which Scott Moncrieff had "smoothly evade[d] the issue" by phrasing it simply: "For a long time I used to go to bed early." (In my Modern Library edition of Proust, which has Kilmartin updated and refurbished by the late D. J. Enright, the first words now read, "For a long time I would go to bed early.")

I have so far not improved much on the progress made by the Monty Python

Proust's novel is all about time. And one does not fully appreciate this aspect until one has learned something of how this awful and apparently inexorable dole may conceivably be cheated.

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madrigal group; but surely there is some charm in the discrepancies and eccentricities that at least potentially give every reader his or her "own" Proust. Nancy Mitford wrote to Evelyn Waugh, "There is not one joke in all the 16 of S. Moncrieff's volumes. In French one laughs from the stomach, as when reading you." E. M. Forster, in *Abinger Harvest*, wrote in a somewhat aggrieved manner that he was disappointed by Scott Moncrieff, "because I was hoping to find Proust easier in English than in French, and do not." Forster continued, "All the difficulties of the original are here faithfully reproduced." That's not quite the same thing as stating that the difficulties were Scott Moncrieff's fault. As for jokes, I sometimes think that it's better to let them mature in the cask. In the chapter "Swann in Love" the eponymous figure quits an assignation with Odette, who has poured him some outstanding tea, and reflects as follows:

> This tea had indeed seemed to Swann, just as it seemed to her, something precious, and love has such a need to find some justification for itself, some guarantee of duration, in pleasures which without it would have no existence and must cease with its passing, that when he left her at seven o'clock to go and dress for the evening, all the way home in his brougham, unable to repress the happiness with which the afternoon's adventure had filled him, he kept repeating to himself: "How nice it would be to have a little woman like that in whose house one could always be certain of finding, what one never can be certain of finding, a really good cup of tea."

I can well imagine Nancy Mitford's laughing at that, with its bathos as regards the fluctuation of male passion, and its allied tone of English-style *froideur*. It is left to Proust to allow the other shoe to fall—more swiftly than is his custom—when the succeeding paragraph dispels Swann's fatuous idyll.

> An hour or so later he received a note from Odette, and at once recognised that large handwriting in which an affectation of British stiffness imposed an apparent discipline upon ill-formed characters, suggestive, perhaps, to less biased eyes than his, of an untidiness of mind, a fragmentary education, a want of sincerity and will-power. Swann had left his

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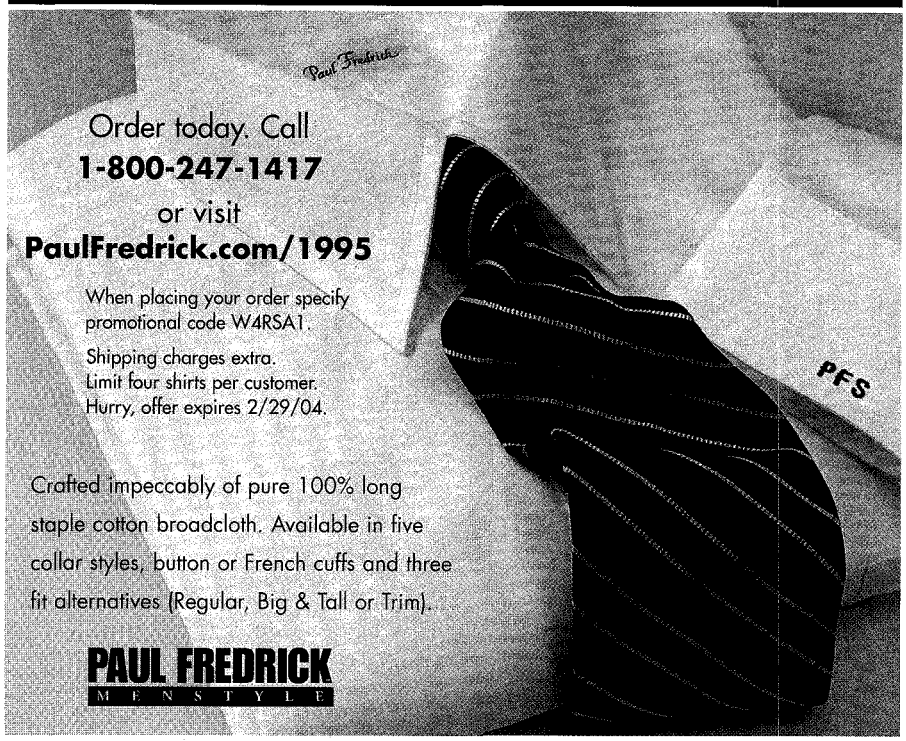

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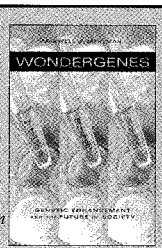

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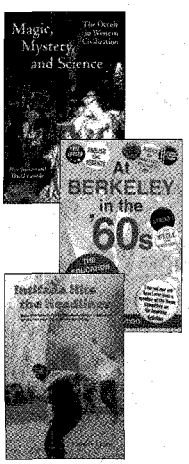

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cigarette-case at her house. "If only," she wrote, "you had also forgotten your heart! I should never have let you have that back."

That letter would stand high in any anthology of what Kingsley Amis once called "cock-crinkling" remarks, and is an unusually severe, if oblique, rebuke to a member of the educated bourgeoisie who had been congratulating himself only for a good *cinq-à-sept* lay and a decent cup of tea (and who has been patting his pockets and wondering where he left his damn smokes). It's easy to see how the Proustian manner became a fashion among the Brits. And that's before one catches the distant echo of yet another shoe, almost muffled in its modesty and reticence: the very cup of tea and frail piece of fragrant cake from which the whole mnemonic epic derives its *mise-en-scène*.

Kilmartin's work as both editor and interpreter has been a cause of great happiness to me, so I bristled somewhat when I read, in Lydia Davis's introduction to her new translation of *Swann's Way*, the following rather backhanded tribute:

> A revision of Scott Moncrieff's translation by Terence Kilmartin, based on the corrected edition of the French, brought the translation closer to the original, cutting gratuitous additions and embellishments and correcting Scott Moncrieff's own misreadings, though it did not go as far as it could have in cutting redundancy and also introduced the occasional grammatical mistake and mixed metaphor; in addition, Kilmartin's ear for the language was not as sensitive as Scott Moncrieff's.

I can really measure redundancy only in English, and I had already noticed in Davis's introduction a reference to "the wistful closing coda in the Bois de Boulogne." A coda can only be a closure, so the sin of redundancy (or tautology, or pleonasm) is one that Davis might be careful about stricturing in others. She also repeats the word "cutting" in the brief passage above, when other terms of art and editing are available to her and when, surely, the most one can hope to achieve in the case of Proust is the reduction of repetition, not its elimination.

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I thus commenced in a fault-finding frame of mind. The best plan seemed to be a straight comparison between versions of my favorite passages in *Swann's Way*. One of these is the description of the loyal but venomous cook Françoise, unacknowledged ruler of the house at Combray. Her vendetta against the hapless and pregnant kitchen maid is one of the minor splendors of the early chapters. Of the unknown and presumably taste-lacking seducer of this foolish, fallen girl Françoise says in the Kilmartin translation, which comes more or less straight from Scott Moncrieff:

> "Dear, dear, it's just as they used to say in my poor mother's day:
> 'Frogs and snails and puppy-dogs' tails,
> And dirty sluts in plenty,
> Smell sweeter than roses in young men's noses
> When the heart is one-and-twenty.'"

The Davis version puts it like this:

> "Oh dear! It's just as they used to say in my poor mother's patois:
> 'Fall in love with a dog's bum,
> And thou'll think it pretty as a plum.'"

Now, the original French is even more pungent, and also (grant Proust this much, for once) more terse:

> *"Qui du cul d'un chien s'amourose,*
> *Il lui parait une rose."*

The whole point of downstairs peasant wisdom, as quoted with amusement by those upstairs, is that it be brisk, vulgar, and memorable. The Scott Moncrieff/Kilmartin rendition fails to observe this rule. It also shields the reader from indecency, which Scott Moncrieff doesn't elsewhere do, and which I would have thought would be unthinkable for Kilmartin. Benjamin Ivry, an experienced translator, has preferred to fault Davis—for using the word "patois," which admittedly is not the term that Françoise herself would be likely to employ. And he quarrels with the rhyme of "bum" and "plum," partly because "bum" is too British. I would say, rather, that using "plum" for "rose" (the latter is, after all, the same word in both tongues) constitutes the mistake here. The necessary image is that of a young man so pussy-trapped, and indeed ass-struck, that he acts like a dog and is prompted by rank and exciting scent. "Puppy-dogs' tails" is a sorry prettification of that notion. If we exonerate Davis for dropping the perfectly serviceable and probable locution "my poor mother's day" and substituting what has become the near Franglais word "patois," the honor here—in point of pungency as well as fidelity—belongs to her.

Proust was more acutely aware of the imminence of death in life than almost any other author, and he took the death of love as his special premonition of the impending or the inevitable. So, even as Swann is sinking,

> From that evening onwards, Swann understood that the feeling which Odette had once had for him would never revive, that his hopes of happiness would not be realised now. And on the days on which she happened to be once more kind and affectionate towards him, had shown him some thoughtful attention, he recorded these deceptive signs of a change of feeling on her part with the fond and sceptical solicitude, the desperate joy of people who, nursing a friend in the last days of an incurable illness, relate as facts of infinitely precious insignificance: "Yesterday he went through his accounts himself, and actually corrected a mistake we had made in adding them up; he ate an egg today and seemed quite to enjoy it, and if he digests it properly we shall try him with a cutlet tomorrow"—although they themselves know that these things are meaningless on the eve of an inevitable death. [Kilmartin/Enright]

> From this evening on, Swann realized that the feeling Odette had had for him would never return, that his hopes of happiness would never be realized now. And on the days when she happened to be kind and affectionate with him again, if she showed him some thoughtful attention, he would note these ostensible and deceptive signs of a slight renewal of feeling, with the loving, skeptical solicitude, the despairing joy of those who, caring for a friend in the last days of an incurable illness, report certain precious accomplishments such as: "Yesterday, he did his accounts himself, and he was the one who spotted a mistake in addition that we had made; he ate an egg and enjoyed it—if he digests it without trouble we'll try a cutlet tomorrow," although they know them to be meaningless on the eve of an inevitable death. [Davis]

The differences here may seem very slight, until we recall that Proust is matching and contrasting the expiry of love with the slow extinction of a human body and personality. Thus in the first version the word "revive" seems much more apropos, and in the second version the alternative use of "realize" involves committing an easily avoidable repetition. "Renewal of feeling" is a clear advance on "change of feeling," though "ostensible," in the second version, is redundant in the context of what are clearly outward, even if deceptively intended, "signs." The error in the accounting—such a perfect bourgeois touch at death's very door—is unlikely to be in anything but addition. It is far more consistent with the period and the tone, and also with the affected portentousness of the scheme, to say "we shall try him with a cutlet" than "we'll try a cutlet." Here the advantage is plainly with the first attempt. This poignant passage closes with Kilmartin/Enright saying of Swann, "He would have been glad to learn that she was leaving Paris for ever; he would have had the heart to remain there; but he hadn't the heart to go." This is again superior to Davis's "He would have been glad if she had left Paris forever; he would have had the courage to remain; but he did not have the courage to leave." To be "glad to learn" is better in keeping with the strenuous but ever maintained distance between what Swann knows and what he chooses to know. The etymological connection between "*coeur*" and "*courage*" is clearer in French than it is in English, but our association of "heart" with fortitude is equally strong, and we have to consider both Swann's mangled emotions and the disease that is consuming him, so "heart" is obviously *le mot juste*. Lastly, and given the terminal nature of the whole paragraph, it is much more apt and final to say "to go" than "to leave."

I can't be the judge of whether Davis is right or wrong in saying that Kilmartin's ear for French is deficient. But as the passage above serves to demonstrate, the laurels may go in the end to the one who has the superior feeling for English. Vladimir Nabokov, no mean multilinguist, wrote in his *Strong Opin-*

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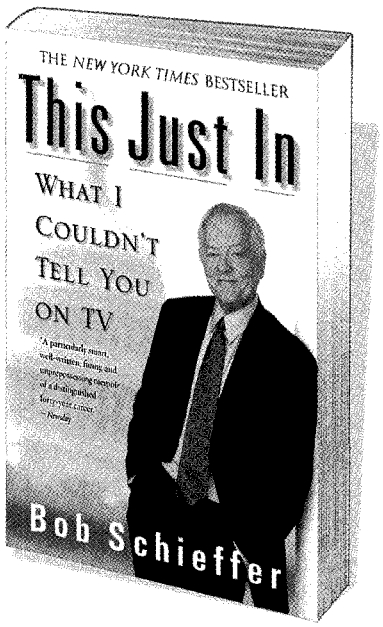

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ions and elsewhere that a translator must be (a) fairly good in the "out of" language, (b) very good indeed in the "in to" language, and (c) a male. That might give Kilmartin two advantages where he need claim only one (I mean the second one). Nabokov quarreled with Scott Moncrieff in the matter of titles, saying that the latter had "inflicted" some "more or less fancy translations" in this area. Nabokov proposed *The Walk by Swann's Place* as a replacement, which certainly meets the test of accuracy, if at some cost in literal-mindedness. A similar directness, almost off-putting this time, is involved in his choice of *In the Shade of Blooming Young Girls*. Unquestionably, the creator of *Lolita* was being true to Proust's *A l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs*, and there is prettification, again, in Scott Moncrieff's *Within a Budding Grove*; but perhaps something should be reserved for the reader's imagination.

The Kilmartin translation, to the ire of Roger Shattuck and other specialists, retained Scott Moncrieff's overall title, taken from Shakespeare's Sonnet XXX and thus naturally euphonious: *Remembrance of Things Past*. Proust himself, when told of this, said simply, "*Cela détruit le titre*," and as Kilmartin states, "There is no doubt that the notion of 'summoning up' the past contradicts the basic theme of the novel, which is a celebration of *involuntary* memory." But Proust, despite his Anglophilia, was not always the most exquisite judge; he complained about *Swann's Way* as well, because he thought that "way" could only connote "manner." Kilmartin's preference was for *In Search of Lost Time*, which has in fact been the title since Enright's successor edition of 1992. But he had reservations even about that, because "the English phrase lacks the specific gravity of the French and misses the double meaning of *temps perdu*: time 'wasted' as well as 'lost.'" This Viking edition preserves the new overall name and rechristens the second volume *In the Shadow of Young Girls in Flower*—a choice slightly less enthusiastically inflammatory than Nabokov's.

How one pines, incidentally, for a translation of Proust by the hand of Nabokov. Here is Professor Adam Krug, in *Bend Sinister*, the first novel that Nabokov wrote in America, as he touches a stone on a bridge on the night his wife has died:

> I had never touched this particular knob before and shall never find it again. This moment of conscious contact holds a drop of solace. The emergency brake of time. Whatever the present moment is, I have stopped it. Too late. In the course of our, let me see, twelve, twelve and three months, years of life together, I ought to have immobilized by this simple method millions of moments; paying perhaps terrific fines, but stopping the train. Say, why did you do it? the popeyed conductor might ask. Because I liked the view. Because I wanted to stop those speeding trees and the path twisting between them. By stepping on its receding tail. What happened to her would perhaps not have happened, had I been in the habit of stopping this or that bit of our common life, prophylactically, prophetically, letting this or that moment rest and breathe in peace. Taming time. Giving her pulse respite. Pampering life, life—our patient.

I think it was perfectly brilliant of Scott Moncrieff to look to the Sonnets for a title. They anticipate Proust in almost every respect, with their deep and melancholy reflections on the sorrows of love, the tortures of jealousy, and—this perhaps above all—the tyranny of time. "When forty winters shall besiege thy brow ..." "Those hours that with gentle work did frame ..." "When I do count the clock that tells the time ..." "Weary with toil, I haste me to my bed ..." "Being your slave, what should I do but tend / Upon the hours and times of your desire?" "Like as the waves make towards the pebbled shore / So do our minutes hasten to their end." "Against my love shall be as I am now / With Time's injurious hand crush'd and o'erworn." "When I have seen by Time's fell hand defaced ..." "When in the chronicle of wasted time ..." It is also notoriously the case that we cannot know whether these morose and smoldering yet lovely lines are intended as addresses to boy or girl or both, and this makes them doubly fitting as either source or analogue (speculation about the identity of Albertine is almost as fervent as that concerning "Mr. WH" or the dark lady).

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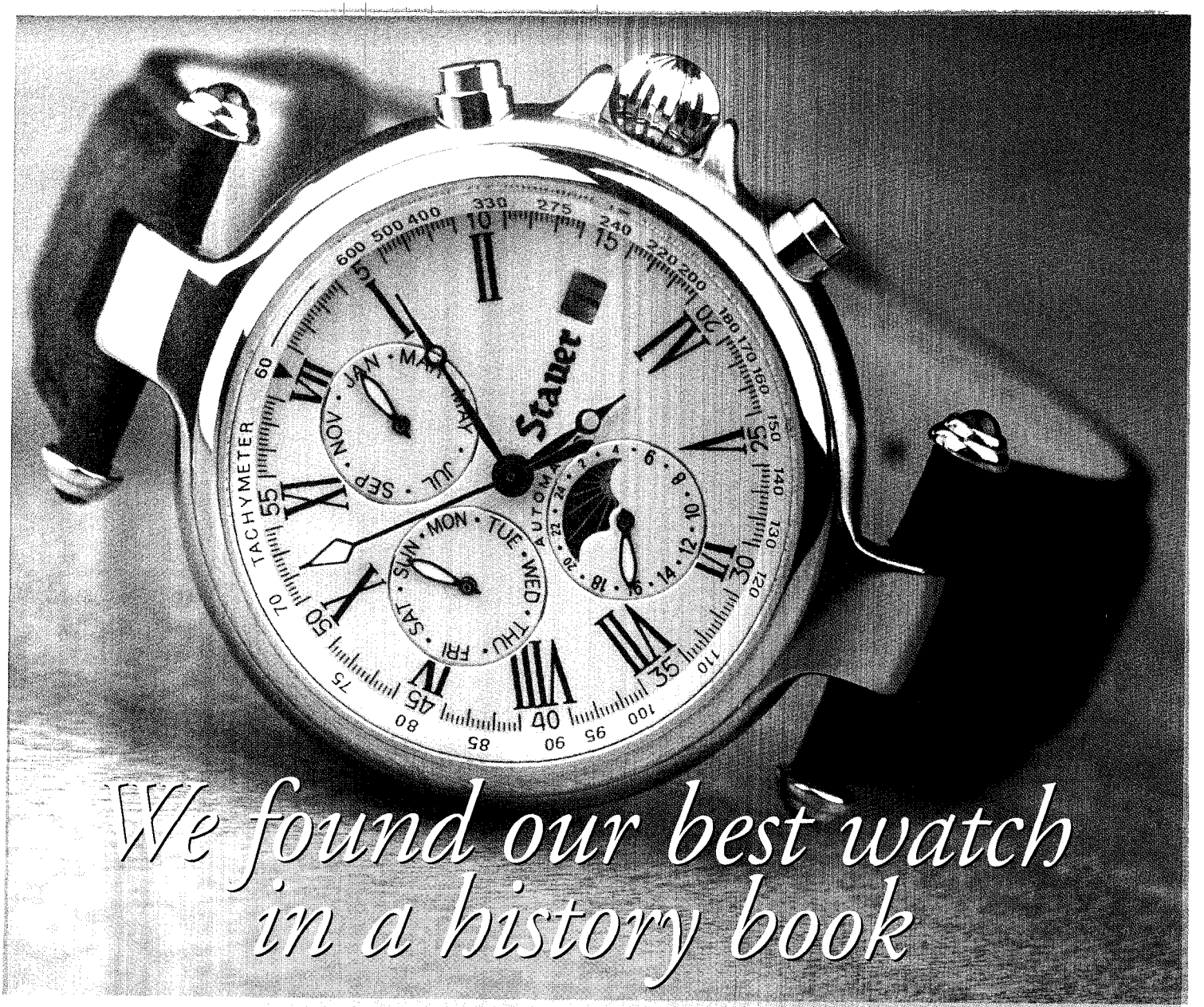

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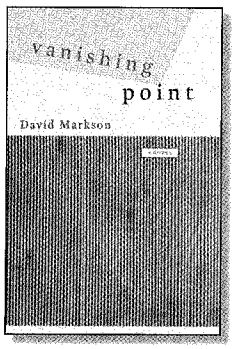

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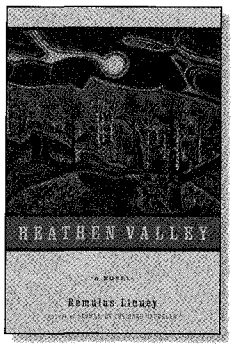

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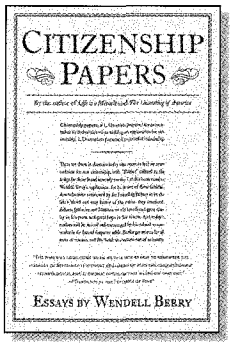

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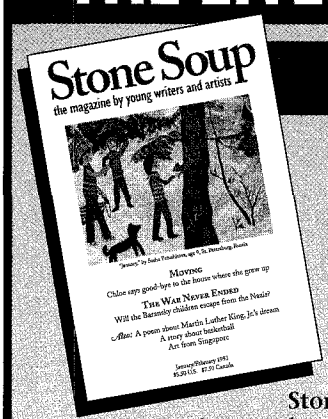

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AT

It is somewhat easier to keep an edition of the Sonnets at hand while immersed in Proust than it is to be simultaneously consulting the collected works of James Joyce or Henry James. In fact, I doubt that even the most tenacious reader has ever attempted the latter expedient. But Jorge Luis Borges thought that the achievement of *Ulysses*—a decade of Homer condensed into an average Dublin day—was its "unrelenting examination of the tiniest details that constitute consciousness," an examination that "stops the flow of time." And James could be terse when he chose to be, laying on the aspirant reader of *The Art of Fiction* the injunction to "write from experience and experience only," adding, in his least forbidding manner, the nevertheless intimidating motto "Try to be one of the people on whom nothing is lost!"

Time, then, is of the essence, and Proust is interested in slowing it down, if not exactly holding it up, so as to enable himself to take longer sips from the precious but evaporating fluid. Here is another measured moment from *Swann's Way*—a tiny episode from a boyhood walk in the Meseglise direction, where the question is whether time can ever be speeded up.

> Not a footstep was to be heard on any of the paths. Quartering the topmost branches of one of the tall trees, an invisible bird was striving to make the day seem shorter, exploring with a long-drawn note the solitude that pressed it on every side, but it received at once so unanimous an answer, so powerful a repercussion of silence and of immobility, that one felt it had arrested for all eternity the moment which it had been trying to make pass more quickly. [Kilmartin/Enright]

> We heard no sound of steps on the avenues. Dividing the height of an unknown tree, an invisible bird, contriving to make the day seem short, explored the surrounding solitude with one prolonged note, but received from it a retort so unanimous, a repercussion so redoubled by silence and immobility, that one felt it had arrested forever that moment which it had been trying to make pass more quickly. [Davis]

Surely the first of these is very much more evocative in English. I mean "evocative" in the strict sense of making one

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hear or apprehend the voice. To be "striving" to make the day seem shorter by holding one note is much closer to the original sense than to be "contriving" to do so. By means of a simple anthropomorphism Proust invests his own feelings in the lone, plaintive effort of the bird and shares in its failure to accelerate matters, noticing that instead it has appeared to make time stand still. Not unlike Berkeley's tree in the forest, since there is apparently no one (save the narrator) to hear it, the bird has been beautifully squandering its time. The necessarily preceding and succeeding dead silence is far better established by saying "not a footstep was to be heard."

Proust very seldom fails to provide a plangent echo or reverberation, and about forty pages later on we find (in the vicinity of the Rue de l'Oiseau, happily enough) the contrastingly inanimate steeple of Saint-Hilaire, where

> when an hour struck, you would have said not that it broke in upon the calm of the day, but that it relieved the day of its superfluity, and that the steeple, with the indolent, painstaking exactitude of a person who has nothing else to do, had simply—in order to squeeze out and let fall the few golden drops which had slowly and naturally accumulated in the hot sunlight—pressed, at a given moment, the distended surface of the silence. [Kilmartin/Enright]

> when the hour rang, you would have said not that it broke the calm of the day, but that it relieved the day of what it contained and that the steeple, with the indolent, painstaking precision of a person who has nothing else to do, had merely—in order to squeeze out and let fall the few golden drops slowly and naturally amassed there by the heat—pressed at the proper moment the fullness of the silence. [Davis]

Here the laurels seem equally distributable. Relieving "the day of its superfluity" is altogether more languorous and telling, but it is by way of "the proper moment" rather than "a given moment" that one fully appreciates the subdued metaphor of winemaking, with its appropriate tribute paid to patience and the seasons.

Birdsong and bells are grace notes to the Proustian fascination with music as the means of unsealing the fount of memory. Swann's hesitant fascination at Mme. Verdurin's musical soiree, as he tries to net and identify the phrase of Vinteuil's sonata (and has his gratitude at the eventual recognition so eagerly and idiotically misconstrued by Mme. Verdurin), takes a full five pages to unfold, and can be read with delight and identification by anyone who has ever had a recollection teased or tortured by a secret harmony.

This rather solemn and touching interlude is succeeded, in a way that Nancy Mitford must have admired, by a first-rate set piece involving the gushing hostess and the crashing bore. Mme. Verdurin and Dr. Cottard are made for each other, like a sort of reverse of Mrs. Malaprop and Sir Anthony Absolute, and one has no choice but to laugh (*pace* Mitford) when the latter gazes at the former "with open-mouthed admiration and studious zeal as she skipped lightly from one stepping-stone to another of her stock of ready-made phrases." Thus Kilmartin/Enright with quite sufficient wit; Davis shows some verve in awarding the literal and platitudinous doctor a look of "speechless admiration and zealous studiousness as she frolicked in this billow of stock expressions." Here it hardly matters whose English or French ear is the better; the acutest ear in Paris was Marcel Proust's, and there's no dulling it.

Proust dons his innocence the better to shed it by degrees. His is a work of memory like no other, conscious of itself even as it relies on the subliminal, the associative, and the contingent.

I have dwelt on micro-effects because in *Swann's Way* the slow movement (Edmund Wilson likened its first, deceptively soporific line to the opening chord of a grand symphony) is predominant. It is not until the later volumes that we sense Proust's excited awareness of modernity, in the form of newly arrived aeroplanes and motorcars. When he talks about soldiers in *Swann*, he is thinking about the prior war and not the next one—a pace and rhythm that does not alter until, in subsequent volumes, we feel the Great War coming on. In *Swann* we glimpse the anatomy of pure snobbery; later comes the recognition of the viciousness of the forces of reaction. In something like the same way, *Swann* highlights love and intrigue, and sex is mostly reserved for the ensuing books. In an almost invisible manner Proust donned his innocence once again to write this, the better to shed it by degrees as he advanced. This is a work of memory like no other: it is conscious of itself even as it relies on the subliminal, the associative, and the contingent. We know from Proust's haggard original editors, as we do from the memoirs of his naive and devoted housekeeper, that the first manuscript might have come from someone more than half insane, including as it did interpolations, marginal additions, excisions, scrawls, and—the worst sign of all—strips of fresh paper stuck at odd angles onto exhausted pages. Part of the function of memory is to forget; the omni-retentive mind will break down and produce at best an idiot savant who can recite a telephone book, and at worst a person to whom every grudge and slight is as yesterday's. Yet Proust is reliably lucid and almost invariably kind. "The struggle of man against power," said Milan Kundera, reprobating amnesia, "is the struggle of memory against forgetting." Ernest Renan earlier took a different view, saying that in order for a nation to exist, it had to agree to remember a certain number of things and also to forget a certain number of things. The almost hypnotic effect of Proust is to make this into a distinction without a difference, and to demonstrate that an apparently self-absorbed individual may yet draw his strength and his insight from a passionate engagement with the interior and exterior lives of others, as well as his own. On him not much was lost. ▲

Christopher Hitchens is a contributing editor of The Atlantic *and a columnist for* Vanity Fair.

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BOOKS

DO AS I SAY

Dr. Laura's counsel is caustic and oftentimes hypocritical, but it is also persuasive

BY CAITLIN FLANAGAN

.....

She's a fishwife and a bit of a kook, a woman given to comically dramatic changes of heart and habit, but Dr. Laura gives some of the best advice about marriage and family life available on the radio, or perhaps anywhere in popular American culture. I say this somewhat wearily, for it is no easy task defending this woman. To begin with there is her manner, which is famously off-putting; she is by turns cloyingly sentimental and caustically pragmatic. She can be primly shocked by her callers' most unremarkable revelations about their sex lives (anyone having sex outside of marriage just sends her around the bend), yet she is quick to give a conversation about almost anything at all a salacious—sometimes obscene—twist (to a caller who complimented her intelligence: "Ooh, lubricate me"). I recently heard her heave a loud, irritated, and impatient sigh after a grieving widower committed no greater transgression than asking her to repeat her advice on whether he should take his small children to their mother's funeral. ("She's a wretched bitch!" a friend of mine told me during kindergarten drop-off the other day, and after hearing that call, I was inclined to agree with him.) She is a person who has had to weather an extraordinary number of humiliating revelations about her personal life, and who has evinced a Clintonian ability to soldier on through the most embarrassing episodes you can imagine; when nude photographs of her showed up on the Web, I thought she'd have to fold up her tent, but it was only onward and upward.

THE PROPER CARE AND FEEDING OF HUSBANDS
by Dr. Laura Schlessinger
HarperCollins

In a nutshell, Dr. Laura believes that many of the aspects of adult life that I had always considered complicated and messy and finely nuanced are in fact simple and clear-cut; that life ought to be neatly fitted around duty and responsibility rather than around the pursuit of that elusive old dog, happiness. This is what makes her the most compelling advocate for children I have thus far encountered, because the well-being of children often depends upon the commitment and obligation of the adults who created them. If you want to know whether the divorce culture has been a disaster for children, tune in to the Dr. Laura show one day. The mainstream media have a cheery name for families rent asunder and then patched together by divorce and remarriage: they are "blended families." But the day-to-day reality of what such blending wreaks upon children is often harsh. The number of children who are being shuttled back and forth between households, and the heartrending problems that this engenders in their lives, is a sin. Every June, Dr. Laura fields multiple calls having to do with transporting reluctant children across vast distances so that court-ordered visitation agreements can be honored. Whereas an article in *Parents* magazine or the relentlessly upbeat family-life columns in *Time* might list some mild and generally useless tips for dealing with such a situation (have the child bring along a "transitional object," plan regular phone calls home, and so forth), Laura throws out the whole premise. What in the world are

JOHN CUNEO

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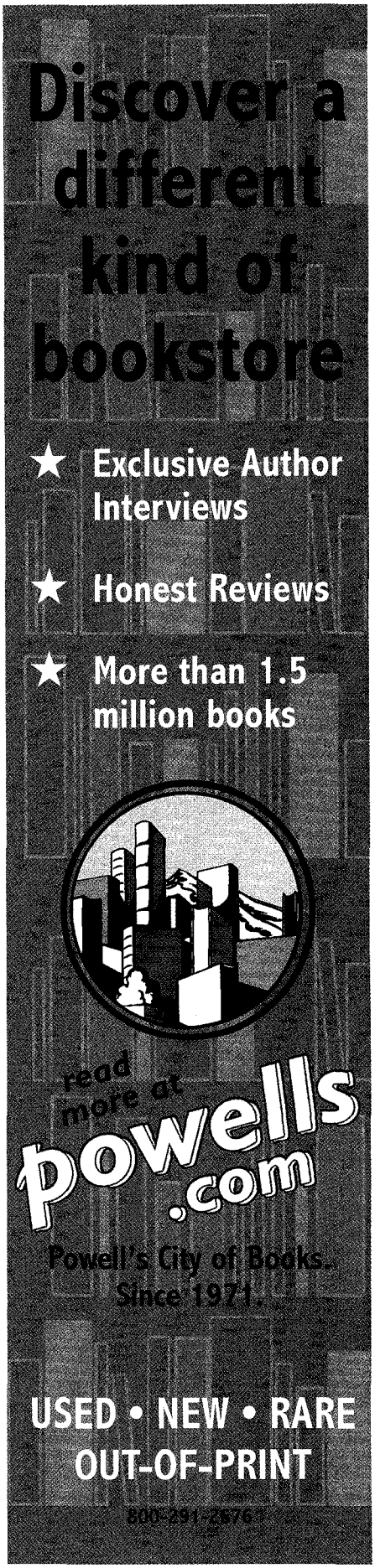
the parents doing living so far away from each other? One of them needs to pick up stakes and move. "I can't do that," the caller always says. "Yes, you can," Laura always replies, and when you think about it, she's right.

The first time I heard her tell a divorced father that he should give up on his first chance at real love—he had met his soul mate during a trip out of state and wanted to move and marry her—so that he could stay close by his children, I almost couldn't believe what I was hearing. She actually wanted the man to drop by his ex-wife's house every afternoon to help with homework and the yard work and play some ball with his sons, which struck me as a radical notion—as indeed it is. A conventional psychotherapist would proceed from the assumption that the man's happiness is the primary consideration in this scenario. Dr. Laura doesn't give a whit about his happiness; she cares only that he fulfill his obligation to his children. Happiness, she might argue, may be a by-product of doing the right thing; but even if it's not, all that matters is that you behave yourself. Her insistence (often shrill, sometimes hopelessly hypocritical) that certain of life's obligations must be honored at almost any cost is refreshing. For the first few years that I listened to her show, I never failed to be impressed by the notion that old-fashioned morality—inflexible and unforgiving—is sufficient unto any FUBAR situation human beings can dream up. I didn't always agree with her: she opposes legal abortion, which I support; she's against premarital sex, of which I dimly recall being distinctly and unapologetically fond. She once harangued a mother who was clearly at sheer wits' end that she shouldn't hire an afternoon babysitter—advice I could hardly bear to listen to, I felt so keenly the mother's desperation and exhaustion. But more than once I wondered if she might have been right about one or another of the points on which we differed.

Dr. Laura's new book, *The Proper Care and Feeding of Husbands,* is, like most of her other books, a bit of a turkey. She compiles them by reproducing the transcripts of calls about a certain topic along with listeners' letters on the same subject, and the results have the deflated, warmed-over feel you would expect from such a process. Laura Schlessinger has a genius for broadcasting: she's quick-witted and sharp-tongued, and she possesses a clear and arresting point of view, all of which makes her compelling on the air. But the exciting feel of the show doesn't come across on the printed page. The newest book combines the "Men are from Mars, women are from Venus" philosophy with the "Surrendered Wife" ethos. To Laura, men are simple creatures, their psychological complexity hovering somewhere between that of Boo Radley and Mr. Green Jeans. What they want is food, sex, and respect. Of course, there's some truth in this. Almost any marriage not marred by what Laura calls the Three A's—affairs, addictions, and abuse, any of which she deems grounds for divorce—can be quickly improved by a wife's simple decision to stop nagging her husband, make sure he has a hot dinner at the end of the day, and increase the amount of hanky-panky she's willing to offer. That a married woman has sexual obligations to her husband once went without saying; now the very notion is radical in the extreme. Our culture is quick to point out the responsibilities husbands have to wives—they should help out with the housework, be better listeners, understand that a woman wants to be more than somebody's mother and somebody's wife—but very reluctant to suggest that a wife has responsibilities to her husband. The only people willing to say so are right-wing conservatives, and they end up preaching to the choir; but I'm hard-pressed to think of a troubled marriage that couldn't be somewhat improved by a wife's adoption of a few of Laura's recommendations.

I find Dr. Laura to be a less fascinating cultural figure these days than she once was. Not surprisingly, a huge number of her supporters are fundamentalist Christians; the fact that they were so eager to take moral, sexual, and even religious advice from an Orthodox Jew—one who gabbed on, with the zeal of a convert, about keeping



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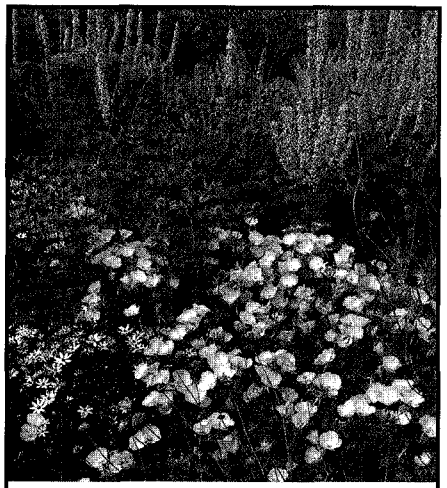

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kosher and observing Shabbat—made her of unique, perhaps historical significance. But she has recently shocked her audience by announcing her decision to no longer practice Judaism. Further, her opinions about homosexuality—she believes gays should try to go straight; she went on record calling homosexuality a "biological error"—are also recently hatched. It was always refreshing to hear her—in the midst of exhorting callers to homeschool their children, go to church, and fight every move of the ACLU—blast someone for not accepting a gay relative. (The "biological error" comment came just before the debut of her television show, and many gay activist groups gleefully take credit for the show's demise, but they had little to do with it. The show tanked because it stank.) And she used to be an avid proponent of fathers who stayed home with their children while their wives worked; she didn't care which of the parents raised the kids, so long as they didn't resort to daycare. But *The Proper Care and Feeding of Husbands* gives me the impression that she's taken the final step toward conventional ultra-conservative thinking: there isn't a single mention of a stay-at-home dad this time. This is a bit of a letdown, since it makes her less of an iconoclast. The book is also undermined by her old bugaboo, hypocrisy. Men need to be breadwinners in a marriage, she says, although she makes millions of dollars a year while her husband—whose career had faltered so severely before his wife's success that the couple was on the verge of bankruptcy—is employed only as her manager. Women ought to cook for their men, but it has been widely reported that her husband does all the cooking (he also converted to Orthodox Judaism; the possible switch back could be a load off for him in the kitchen). Men need old-fashioned respect in their homes, we are told, but Laura kept her maiden name, and their son bears his mother's surname and not his father's.

To a person, just about, my friends are liberals, and when I try to talk to them about Dr. Laura, they think I've gone completely cuckoo. I took her first book on a family vacation a few years back, and my father read it one night and then sat me down for a very serious and disappointed discussion about my declining literary and political tastes. But none of my loved ones, if they could tease Laura's central argument about children and marriage from the tissue of arrogance and crackpot harangue in which it is embedded, would disagree with it in the least. Part of Laura's problem is that she has been a victim of her own poor advance. If she had admitted up front that as a young woman she lived a life of sexual liberty and experimentation (rather than waiting for the press to discover and reveal this past, one humiliating episode at a time), and if she had explained that motherhood had produced profound changes in her, she would have earned herself a lot less derision and ire. There are many of us who understand that once you have children, certain doors ought to be closed to you forever. That to do right by a child means more than buying him the latest bicycle helmet and getting him on the best soccer team. It means investing oneself completely in the marriage that wrought him, for there isn't a person in the world who won't date his moments of greatest happiness to the time his family was the most intact, whole, unshakable. I wish there was someone a bit more hip and glamorous than Laura standing up for this simple truth, but in our time and place there isn't.

"Do as I say, not as I do" might be Schlessinger's motto—never a particularly inspiring credo, yet I am often inspired by Dr. Laura. More than once I have thought through a problem and behaved in a way that's made me proud because I've followed advice gleaned from her show. The measure of a person, she believes (and I have come to believe), is found not in what one thinks but in what one does. Action is everything. It's a lesson I could have learned from Aristotle, I suppose, but Aristotle doesn't have a three-hour slot on AM radio. Nor could he have imagined the complete mess that so many Americans have made of family life.

Caitlin Flanagan is a contributing editor of The Atlantic.

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BOOKS

HIGH PLAINS DRIFTER

Don Quixote, a masterpiece of comic seriousness, gets a new and "virtually twee-free" translation

BY TERRY CASTLE

.....

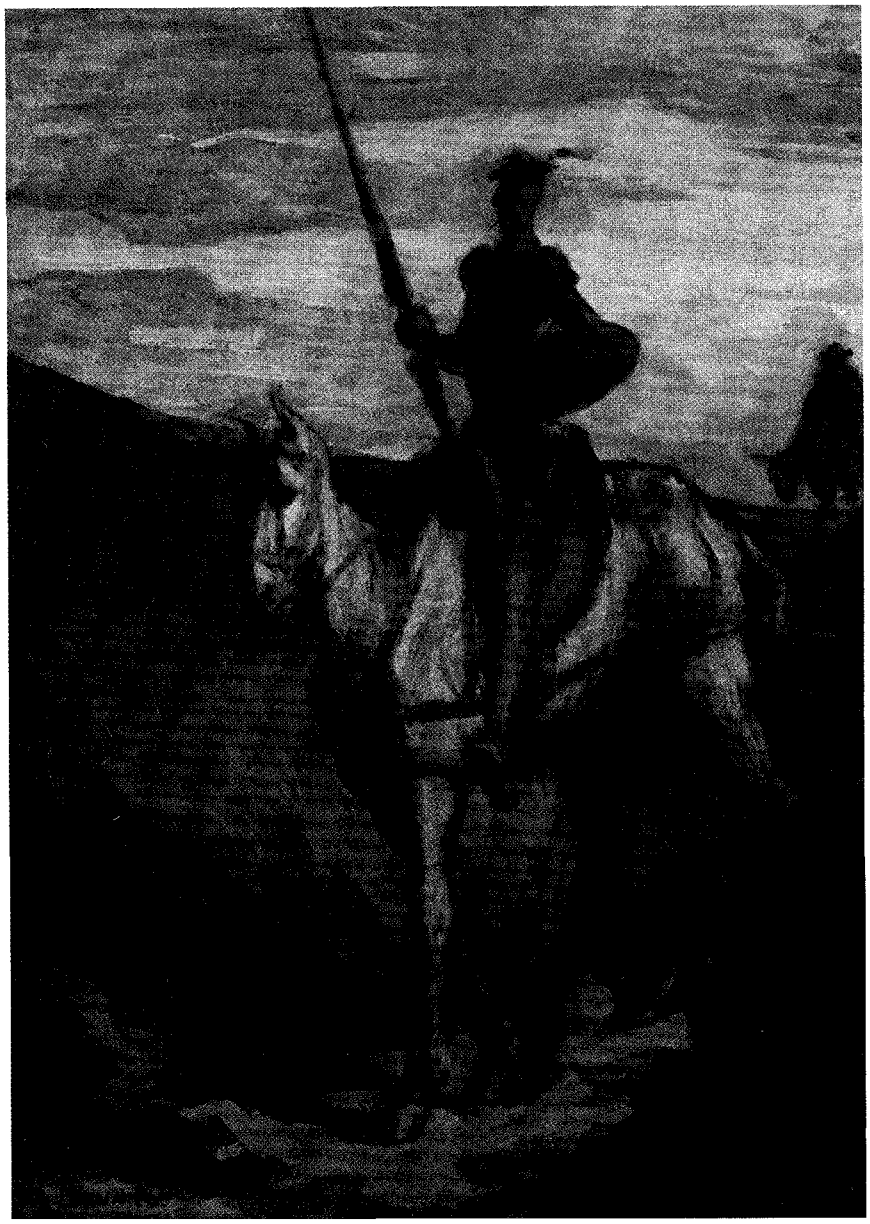
How—without feeling as addled as its hero—to try to say something new about *Don Quixote*? About the work once singled out by the Nobel Institute as the greatest novel of all time? After imperishable tributes by Fielding, Sterne, Samuel Johnson, Austen, Dickens, Thackeray, Flaubert, Dostoyevsky, Twain, Faulkner, Ortega y Gasset, Unamuno, Mann, Kafka, Joyce, Lukács, Borges, Paz, Nabokov, Calvino, and Kundera? The lowly academic hack—in this case female, a plumpish Sanchita Panza, without donkey or wineskin or really much more than *turista* Spanish—feels especially unqualified. And besides, who really cares? An eminent critic wrote that everybody reads *Don Quixote* once but few people read it twice. (After one first absorbed it in childhood, Coleridge suggested, it became, like a refreshing wellspring, a work simply to dip into.)

I first read Cervantes's comic masterpiece in my early teens, in the classic Samuel Putnam translation from 1949. I've just now read it through again—in Edith Grossman's superb new English version—at the age of almost fifty. By any standard I'm way ahead of the game. For surely very few people nowadays read *Don Quixote* even once. So incessant are the demands of modern life—wading through the e-mail, fretting about shoulder-fired missiles, shopping till one drops—that one almost craves a masterpiece-free zone, a place in which one doesn't have to worry about the timeless (and guilt-inducing) monuments of human genius. Who's got time for timelessness?

So the best thing to say up front, perhaps, is get hold of *Don Quixote* and *make* time for it. It will be worth the television sitcoms you skip, the thirty or so quiet evenings you spend on it. Edith Grossman actually makes it easy for you, O frazzled reader, because she has produced the most agreeable *Don Quixote* ever. Don't be put off by Harold Bloom's introduction (major windbag alert in effect); go right to the thing itself. *Don Quixote*, famously, is the first major work of Western literature to take ordinary human life for its subject—specifically, a life that is replete with accidents, fiascoes, and indignities—and make it over into something luminous with meaning. It does so without pomp or sententiousness—it's the friendliest and least formal of all the Great Books—yet will overwhelm you, in the end, with its moral and imaginative splendor.

Yeah, yeah, I hear you saying, *but I already know the story and I'm sick of it.* True, in some ways *Don Quixote* is almost too familiar. Even without having read it, most people (if they know anything) can recite some or all of the plot: Don Quixote, a tall, eccentric, elderly bachelor living in a tiny village in La Mancha, reads a pile of old-fashioned chivalric romances and is deluded by them into thinking that he is a knight-errant, ordained by the Almighty to perform epic deeds and restore justice, virtue, and beauty to the world. Taking up a rusty breastplate and sword, he mounts the household nag—a withered beast named Rocinante—and sets off in search of heroic adventures, along the way acquiring an equally befuddled squire,

DON QUIXOTE
by Miguel de Cervantes translated by Edith Grossman
Ecco Press



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Sancho Panza. Knightly fancies lead to various pratfalls and humiliations, the most celebrated of which involves Quixote mistaking a windmill for an evil giant and getting knocked off Rocinante while trying to charge it.

After two volumes' worth of cock-up and confusion (Cervantes published Part 1 in 1605 and a sequel, Part 2, in 1615) Don Quixote, finally cured of his delusions, denounces the "detestable books of chivalry" that led him astray and apologizes to Sancho for having dragged him around the countryside so idiotically. But to everyone's dismay he also becomes melancholy and dies soon after, much mourned by his small circle of friends and "loved ... by everyone who knew him."

I confess that I wasn't especially looking forward to my second reading of the work—so shopworn, at this point, was much of my existing mental *Quixote* imagery (think cheap Picasso posters, *Man of La Mancha*, a groggy Frank Sinatra singing "The Impossible Dream"). But the book quite staggered me with its charm, beauty, and profundity. Once you enter (or re-enter) its expansive, ruminative, deeply nourishing world, the literary equivalent of eating "slow food," it's hard not to become a bit of a bore about how stupendous it is.

Some of my immediate pleasure, it is true, was of a pedantic nature. I have long taught the history of the novel, and it was wonderful to go back to the source, so to speak, with Cervantes. A basic convention in novels dictates that the characters encountered will be "real" people, more or less like ourselves. Supernatural beings, we assume, will not involve themselves in the action; nor will anything other than the standard laws of nature apply. When a writer self-consciously introduces strange or supernatural elements, we immediately recognize, with greater or lesser equanimity, that the novelist has decided to violate the conventions of the genre.

Don Quixote is considered (in Edith Grossman's words) the "first—and probably the greatest—novel" in the European tradition in part because it makes this claim to represent "ordinary life" a central and profound aspect of the plot.

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Cervantes's fiction is a sort of birth announcement—droll and yet decisive—for realism itself. It betokens a new human attitude. By showing Quixote driven mad by the involuted, highly stylized, comically implausible heroic romances of the later Middle Ages, fantastic tomes such as the fourteenth-century *Amadís of Gaul* and the fifteenth-century *Palmerín of England*, Cervantes was not just spoofing an out-of-date literary mode; he was also marking the obsolescence of the philosophical world view it embodied. *Don Quixote* is far more, one soon realizes, than just a comic assault on some fanciful old stories: in its deepest aspect it is a metaphysical statement—a revolutionary affirmation of that secular and humanistic point of view we associate with modernity itself.

Consider: in *Palmerín of England* a crucial episode involves the enchantment of the hero's father and his imprisonment in the castle of a horrible ogre. Cervantes no doubt had this episode and others like it in mind when the pixilated Don Quixote decides that the somewhat dirty inn in which he and Sancho lodge one night is really an enchanted castle. They are made to sleep in the same room with a mule driver who is carrying on an affair with the inn's uncouth servant girl, Maritornes. When Maritornes comes to visit her lover that night and tumbles into Don Quixote's bed by mistake, the baffled knight at once assumes that she is the beautiful daughter of the lord of the castle and has fallen madly in love with him. As he begins, ludicrously enough, to explain why he cannot satisfy her ardor (he must be faithful to Dulcinea, the local peasant wench to whom he has pledged his knightly troth), the mule driver wakes up and, enraged at finding Maritornes plumped down in his neighbor's bed, delivers "such a terrible blow to the narrow jaws of the enamored knight that he bathed his whole mouth in blood," knocking him out cold. Yet even when Don Quixote comes out of his swoon the next morning, he's no less delusional: he tells Sancho that he has been attacked in the night by "a hand attached to the arm of some monstrous giant."

We laugh here—or at least give a snort—because we know that giants and enchanters do not exist. Yet it is hard to overestimate the radical reorientation of consciousness when humanity at large—starting in Western Europe during the Renaissance—began divesting itself of belief in supernatural causes. Cervantes allegorizes just such a process. Don Quixote is, as it were, the last man to believe in magic—the last man in his world to feel himself surrounded (and often buffeted) by invisible beings. He's like a paranoid schizophrenic, thinking that everything that happens to him is the work of unseen sorcerers plotting against him—and his mental isolation is immense, despite Sancho's ambivalent support for some of his fantasies. For much of the fiction he comes off as a senile man-child: fey, withered, dissociated, lost in his archaic, estranging dreams.

Quixote and Sancho are repeatedly punched, flogged, tripped, unhorsed, poked, pulled along by their beards, clobbered on the pate. (Not that Edith Grossman often uses bits of antiquated translatorese like "pate.")

Georg Lukács, the great twentieth-century Marxist critic, once said that *Don Quixote* "stands at the beginning of the time when the Christian God began to forsake the world." Cervantes—who some biographers think was the descendant of converted Spanish Jews—retains a kind of superficial Catholic orthodoxy in *Don Quixote*. But one also feels throughout the book a powerful drift away from the metaphysics of belief itself—from any felt sense of a nonhuman presence at work in the world.

Indeed, one might call *Don Quixote* the first great Western story without gods. One of the things that struck me on this reading was the almost post-nuclear *emptiness* of the fictional landscape. Nearly everything in the work seems to take place on some vast denuded plain, with few houses and few people and only the hot, high Spanish sky above. (After Quixote and Sancho leave their village in Part 1, they seem lost for ages in this barren landscape, their sole shelter from the heat often nothing more than a small stand of olive trees or a patch of scrubby esparto grass by some rocks.) Yes, Cervantes gives us a kind of documentary realism here: this is the same parched and unforgiving Iberian landscape we see in the background of, say, Robert Capa's extraordinary photographs from the Spanish Civil War. But he gives us realism in a larger sense, too. *Don Quixote*'s emptied-out plain is a Castilian prototype of the blasted heath traversed by Lear and the Fool in *King Lear*, of the strange wasteland in which Vladimir and Estragon find themselves stranded in *Waiting for Godot*. And in the Quixotean setting, as in Shakespeare or Beckett, the bare, almost lunar quality would seem to register the disappearance of any residual *spiritual* reality. There's nobody out there—not even the feeblest, most decadent of enchanters.

Sounds bleak, I know—but always in Cervantes (and this is both his splendor and his charm) there's an upside: without gods, human beings begin to see one another. The human individual is the great Cervantean subject, the subject on whom is lavished all of Cervantes's prodigious comic tenderness, the animate center of his world. I use the word "tenderness" advisedly here: I disagree in the end with Nabokov's famous assertion that Cervantes is sadistic toward his two main characters. ("Both parts of *Don Quixote* form a veritable encyclopedia of cruelty," Nabokov argued in the posthumously published *Lectures on "Don Quixote"* [1983]. Thanks to its author's befouling delight in "cheerful physical cruelty," Nabokov continued, the great Spanish novel stands out as "one of the most bitter and barbarous books ever penned.")

It is true that the ruling visual motif of *Don Quixote* could be said to be the bruise. Once off on their sallies, Quixote and Sancho are repeatedly punched, flogged, tripped, unhorsed, poked, pulled along by their beards, clobbered on the

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pate. (Not that Edith Grossman often uses bits of antiquated translatorese like "pate." That this version of *Don Quixote* is virtually twee-free is one of its signal strengths.) Quixote loses part of an ear; Sancho gets tossed in a blanket by rambunctious peasants; both characters tumble into holes and caves with some regularity.

The injuriousness of this fictional world might be explained, of course, by slapstick convention. Comic blows, we surmise, don't really hurt. The Quixotean buffoon can slip, fall, crash into walls—but he immediately gets up again, perhaps grimacing but essentially unscathed.

Except the opposite is the case. Nabokov was right to say that Cervantes lays special emphasis on bodily affliction. He makes us linger on his characters' physical vulnerability—gives it new specificity. He pays the same interested attention, tellingly, to the hurts suffered by Quixote and Sancho's animals. Both Rocinante and "the grey"—Sancho's slew-footed donkey—share in the tribulations of their masters, especially the poor clapped-out Rocinante. One can only rejoice at those moments when, after numerous knocks and mishaps, the bedraggled old fellow finally gets to graze in a shady spot and even to caper about a bit.

Yet surely this emphasis on a sort of banal, nonheroic suffering—contra Nabokov—is something other than authorial sadism. I take it as another emblem, perhaps the most tangible one, of Cervantes's revolutionary interest in the individual. No writer before him (not even Chaucer or Boccaccio) registered the physical life of the ordinary human being in quite the palpable way that he did. Knights in medieval romance suffer wounds, but seldom do we hear about the shape of the laceration, the location of the bruise. We're not really asked to think about it. In contrast, the pain experienced by characters in *Don Quixote* is the kind of pain we feel: everyday pain, localized pain, *our* pain.

This attention to physical detail—to the sensations of lived experience—is everywhere in *Don Quixote*. Like all great novelists who came after him, Cervantes was preternaturally alert to individual traits—to tiny gestures, oddities of bearing, physical blemishes, all the myriad things that differentiate one human being from another. Quixote himself is spectacularly weird-looking—rawboned and "weathered," we learn at the start, and also comically elongated. When he is visited at home by his friends at the beginning of Part 2 (he is still recovering from his first sallies), they find him "sitting up in bed, dressed in the green flannel vest he wore under his armor, and a red Toledan cap, and looking so dry and gaunt that he seemed to be a mummy." He's like a bit of Manchego—aged and also a bit crumbly under the wrappings. The small detail of the green flannel vest—so *useless* after four hundred years, except to bring us right into the scene and delight us—is lovely.

Quixote and Sancho are physically mismatched, of course (one fat and one thin), and as such, the first in a long and magnificent line of odd-looking comic duos. It is amazing how far the Cervantean innovation—put two funny people together and they become, in their interaction, even funnier—extends down through the centuries. Austen used it with Emma and Harriet; Dickens with Pickwick and Sam Weller; Wodehouse with Jeeves and Bertie Wooster. Preferably some physical, linguistic, or psychic contrast is preserved between the partners: in the pop-culture realm one thinks at once of Laurel and Hardy, Lucy and Ricky (or Lucy and Ethel), Basil Fawlty and Manuel. Thanks in part to the marvelous accidents of physiognomy, John Cleese's whole comedic career might be considered a grand Cervantean venture—from Monty Python's Ministry of Silly Walks to the timeless master-servant shenanigans of *Fawlty Towers*. Were *Don Quixote* in need of one, "Silly Walks" would make a good subtitle: the book is indeed a silly walk—a sort of goofy picaresque—around Renaissance Spain. And surely Cleese knew what he was doing when he gave the tall, lean, hidalgo-ish Basil Fawlty—fated to see his romantic dreams for his hotel repeatedly collapse in chaos—a short, jabbery, farcically incompetent Spanish waiter as an employee.

Yet Cervantes's pleasure in the Quixote-Sancho pairing offers an insight, finally, into his moral vision. By which I don't mean to underplay the sheer triumphant silliness of the book. When I started rereading *Don Quixote*, I was afraid it wouldn't be very funny—that its comedy would be somehow beneath me, not "adult" or camp enough (I'd take Firbank over the Three Stooges any day). *Sancho Panza*, I thought, *ugh*.

And I was right: a lot of the comedy *was* beneath me. It was so stupid that I couldn't believe I was laughing at it—except I was. (There's bodily humor aplenty, but as I quickly discovered, if you try to resist, you're doomed.)

The book does have a moral vision, though—one inextricably bound up with its warmth and humor. This comes through most clearly perhaps in what one might call Cervantes's *friendliness* as a narrator—in his sociability, in the way he honors other people (including the reader), in his unwavering respect for those who, like knights of old, remain open and courteous to strangers. Quixote and Sancho, of course, are the greatest of friends—notwithstanding differences in rank, wealth, outlook, and relative sanity. (So are Rocinante and the donkey, who constantly nuzzle and solace each other.) Sancho is unsure at times why he stays with his master; no riches seem to be in the offing, and he keeps getting beaten up. But as he explains to someone they meet on the road, "There's no malice in [Señor Quixote]: a child could convince him it's night in the middle of the day, and because he's simple I love him with all my heart and couldn't leave him no matter how many crazy things he does." And Quixote, however tenuous his grip on reality, feels the same way about his squire. One of the shattering things about Quixote's death (again, like life, in that you see this death coming from miles away but it's a shock nonetheless) is that we know how bereft Sancho will be.

Though Cervantes remains in many ways mysterious (we know more about him than we do about Shakespeare, but that's not saying much), it is clear he was a lovable and endearing man. Not because life was easy for him—in fact, it was tumultuous and painful. As a young man he served as a harquebusier

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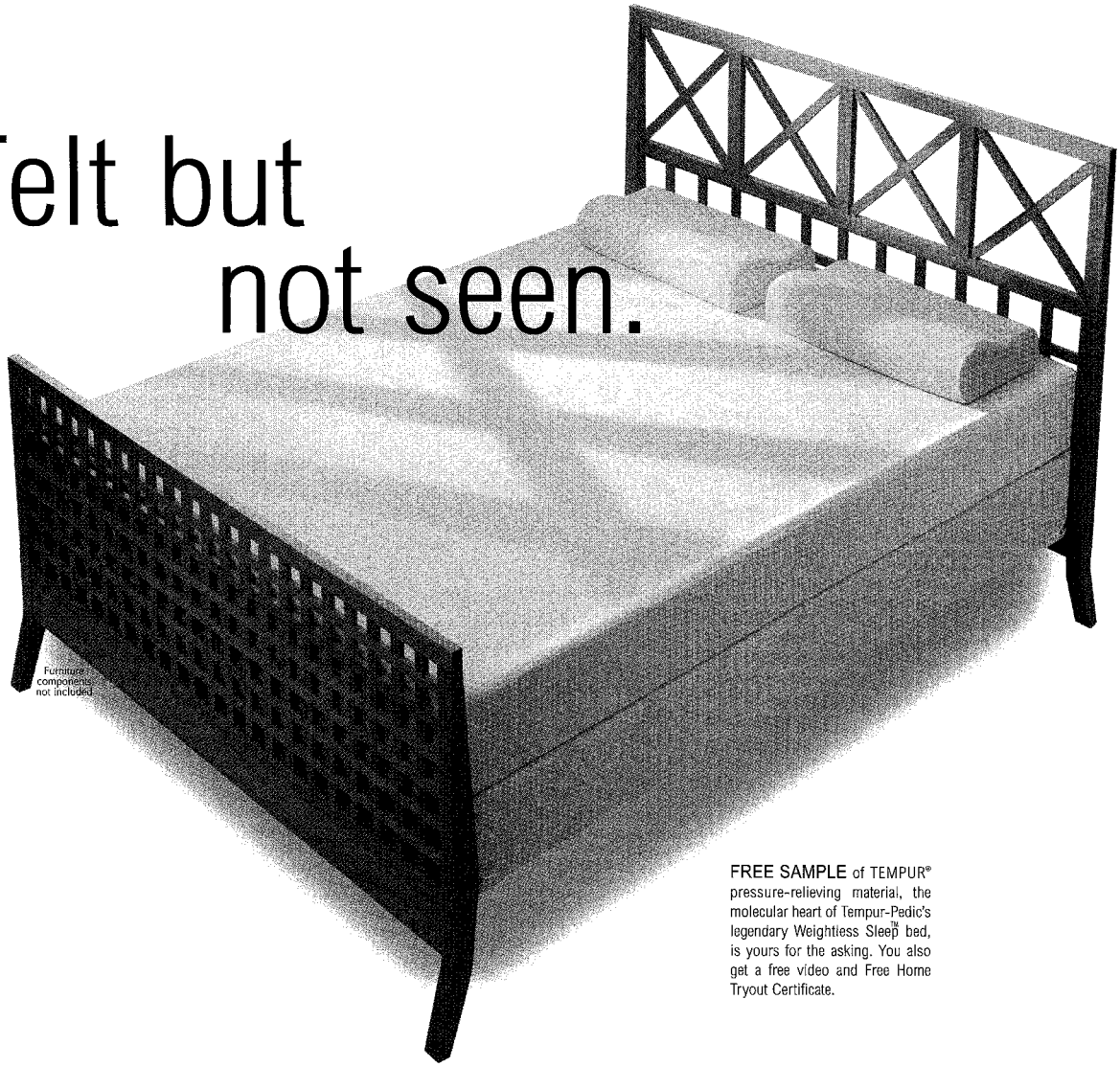

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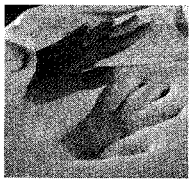

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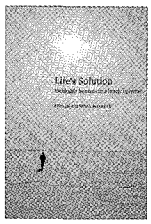

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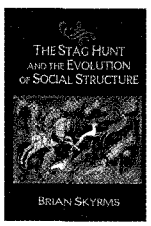

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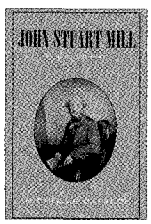

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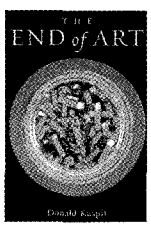

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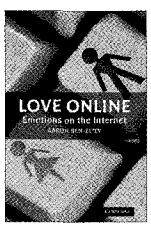

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in a Spanish regiment in Naples, and had a hand mangled in the Battle of Lepanto—the momentous 1571 sea fight in which Christian naval forces sank the Turkish fleet and halted (for good, it turned out) further Ottoman incursion into the western Mediterranean. Trying to get back to Spain from Italy, Cervantes was captured by Barbary pirates and held for ransom. He was imprisoned in Algiers for five years, serving part of that time as a slave of the viceroy, Hassan Pasha. When, maimed and impoverished, he finally returned to Spain (after being ransomed by a Spanish priest), he was denied a royal preferment. He languished in debtors' prison and struggled to support himself as a poet and a playwright. Life looked up with the huge success of *Don Quixote*, but by then Cervantes was worn out. He died in 1616, soon after Part 2 appeared.

One might expect such a man to be embittered—to despise other people. But everyone who met Cervantes seems to have been impressed by his kindness and humor. Cervantes, said the priest who ransomed him, "showed a very special grace in everything." This grace was evident even to the brutal Hassan Pasha. After leading several escape attempts, Cervantes refused, despite the threat of torture, to name any of his conspirators and instead chatted gallantly—and amusingly—with his tormentors.

The hardships Cervantes faced seem, paradoxically, to have opened him to the world. (Or opened him further: his curiosity about life was apparently innate.) And it is this openness, finally, that makes him still so valuable now. No contemporary North American reader of *Don Quixote* can fail to be struck by its surprisingly sympathetic evocation of the world of Islam. The Muslim element is everywhere in Cervantes's novel—for reasons both obvious and profound. From the eighth to the fifteenth century Spain had been the site, of course, of a bloody and continuous struggle for dominance between the Christian West and the Islamic East. The "valorous knights" with whom Quixote identifies most fervently in his insanity are precisely those Christian warriors who are celebrated for helping to drive the Moors out of Spain. Indeed, a conspicuous element in his folly is that Quixote doesn't seem to realize that the Moors *have* been driven out. He's stunningly oblivious of history itself, and at his most puerile when declaiming about paynims and Saracens.

Cervantes's own attitude is more complex. At times he draws directly, yet without rancor, on his experiences in the Islamic world. In the most delightful of *Don Quixote*'s interpolated tales—three famous embedded stories related by characters whom Quixote and Sancho meet on the road—a weathered Spanish officer describes how after being captured by the Turks at Lepanto, he was forced to serve as an oarsman in the sultan's fleet at Constantinople, and was then held for ransom in the prison of the king of Algiers. He has just gotten back to Spain, he tells Quixote, having finally escaped his captors with the help of a beautiful young Moorish woman. (He hopes to marry her; they have fallen in love, and she wishes to convert to Christianity.) It's an exhilarating sequence. Cervantes here takes the reader on a kind of textual cruise—away from the parched plains of Castile and to the populous, polyglot Islamic cities of the eastern Mediterranean. By transporting us to Constantinople and back—past Cyprus, Crete, Naxos, Rhodes, and other breezy blue Ottoman outposts—Cervantes both expands and aerates the entire narrative.

But the human element is equally refreshing. Despite the clichéd captive-in-Barbary plot, no Turkish or Arab character in this interpolated tale is a caricature. Cervantes seems to be describing people he actually met. He takes a subtle, almost Mozartian interest in the psychic interplay between Christian prisoners and Muslim captors. And most pleasing (however fanciful) is the love plot itself: a breathtaking transformation of Cervantes's personal trauma—war, injury, loss, enslavement—into a cosmopolitan allegory of mutual attraction and restored human connection.

Elsewhere in *Don Quixote*, Cervantes challenges the crude logic of Western xenophobia. In Part 2 Quixote and Sancho meet up with a band of German pilgrims, one of whom turns out to be Sancho's former friend and neighbor Ricote the Morisco. (The Moriscos

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were those Muslims left living in Spain after the Christian victory; they were forcibly expelled—on pain of death—by royal decree from 1609 to 1613.) Ricote, a humble shopkeeper, has disguised himself as a pilgrim in order to retrieve a small "treasure" he had to leave behind when he and his family were forced to flee. His wife and daughters are in Algiers; he hopes to settle them in Germany, far from the "terror and fear" they have endured in Spain. His story is a poignant one, the refugee's timeless lament, and Sancho listens sadly, sharing a wineskin with his old friend, until they "go their separate ways." Cervantes never belabors the point, or descends into sentimentality, but offers a moving affirmation of ordinary human ties flourishing in spite of fanaticism.

Cervantes was imprisoned in Algiers for five years, serving part of that time as a slave of the viceroy, Hassan Pasha. Still, in *Don Quixote* he challenges the crude logic of Western xenophobia.

Finally, one wants both to laugh and to marvel at the purportedly Muslim origins of *Don Quixote* itself. One of Cervantes's most ingratiating (and postmodern) gambits is to pretend that he is not in fact the real author of the novel but, rather, has simply had it translated from the recovered manuscripts of a mysterious and noble Arab named Cide Hamete Benengeli (which translates roughly as Sir Ahmed Eggplant). Though he has never met Benengeli, or anyone who has, he pays the Arab the most exquisite and elaborate mock homage throughout, a gesture that at this point in history undoubtedly has new and startling pathos.

Cervantes had a faith in *conversation,* in paying attention to others, in bonding with strangers, in speaking, reading, and writing across all kinds of human barriers. The sharing of stories—stories of real life, not the fabrications of romance—had the power, he grasped, to assuage madness, loneliness, and pain. Quixote and Sancho are great, life-saving conversationalists. Their friendship lives on and dilates in the absurd, meandering, yet touching debates they have with each other. At bottom both seem to want to prolong their chivalrous adventures precisely in order to prolong the pleasures of listening and speaking, speaking and listening. And in turn they speak—and listen with attention—to every "noble stranger" they meet on the road.

In the fantasy of shared authorship Cervantes would seem to allegorize a broader vision of human fellowship. Hearing another voice, taking in another's story, is the essential thing—the humanizing component in an otherwise bleak landscape. It saves us from our lunacy and pride, both personal and cultural.

At one point, when I was in my early twenties and very depressed, I talked a lot to a friend, an American man who had spent many years in Madrid. In one of our conversations he told me of a phrase used in Spain to console someone: "*Te acompaño en tu pesar*"—"I accompany you in your sorrow." One "accompanied" by listening sympathetically, by responding, by not turning away. As I reread Cervantes's munificent fiction, the phrase kept coming back to me. At the deepest level *Don Quixote* is about accompanying someone and being accompanied in turn. Cervantes is a superb, seducing, insouciant companion: one reaches the novel's final word—the courteous "*Vale*" to the reader, set down almost four hundred years ago—with an abrupt pang of loss. *Don Quixote* is a joke, of course: nine hundred pages of galumphing around, getting splattered, toppled, and (finally) deeply mortified by one's own folly. But enter its talkative spaces and you may find yourself, like the hero and Sancho, the opposite of sad and alone. ▲

Terry Castle is a professor of English at Stanford University. Her books include Boss Ladies, Watch Out!: Essays on Women, Sex, and Writing *(2002) and* The Literature of Lesbianism: A Historical Anthology From Ariosto to Stonewall *(2003).*

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LOOKING FOR TROUBLE

Get a life—at your own risk

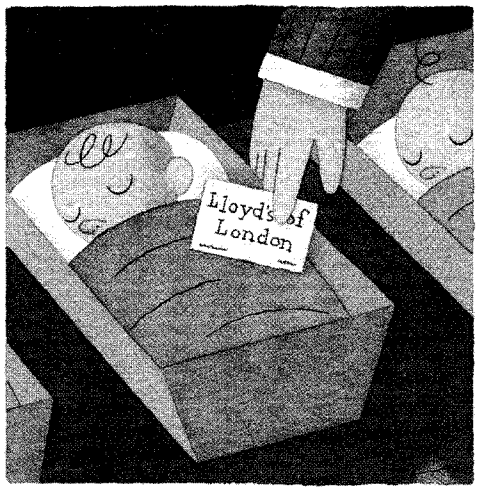
BY CULLEN MURPHY

.....

Toward the end of the James Bond movie *The World Is Not Enough* there is a scene where Bond and his sidekick, a physicist played by Denise Richards, are trapped in a nuclear submarine submerged in the Bosporus. The submarine's reactor is about to explode, killing all aboard and turning Istanbul into Chernobyl. But maybe, if Bond can hold his breath for a really long time, and swim underwater through a series of balky bulkheads, and then twirl some dials in exactly the right way—maybe, just maybe, everything will be okay. Should he give it a try? Denise Richards weighs the options—certain death in seconds versus a slender reed of hope—and declares, "James, it's too risky."

Those words immediately became a household catchphrase, used by my children whenever someone (in the newspapers, on television) cites the slim possibility of harm as a reason for inaction or concern. More broadly they use it in response to any mention of risk assessment at all. This means that the words are used a lot, because a growing share of the news consists not of bad things that have actually happened but of correlations indicating that bad things might very well happen. It is the White Queen syndrome, recalling the character in *Through the Looking-Glass* who screams in pain before she in fact pricks her finger.

The precautionary outlook has its merits. But as the Harvard analysts David Ropeik and George Gray point out in their recent book, *Risk: A Practical Guide for Deciding What's Really Safe and What's Really Dangerous in the World Around You*, the litany of risky correlations has become absurdly extended. In a spirit of ironic dismay I keep my own running list of discomfiting news reports. A scientist at the University of Bristol, in England, has discovered a correlation between not shaving every day and an increased risk of stroke (and decreased frequency of orgasm). Epidemiologists in Copenhagen have determined that airline pilots and their cabin crews are at greater risk of leukemia and skin cancer, perhaps because the high altitude exposes them to extra doses of cosmic radiation. A study conducted at Sweden's Karolinska Institute reveals that men who have worked for at least a year as bus drivers or taxi drivers are more likely than other men to suffer heart attacks.



GREG CLARKE

Given the often conflicting nature of various risk factors, figuring out one's aggregate risk, or "risk load," is obviously beyond the ordinary person's capacity. People who are short have a greater risk of dying from stroke, but tall men are more likely to develop prostate cancer. It is not really surprising that people who suffer from depression have a greater likelihood of heart disease, but a sunny disposition isn't necessarily a happy alternative: optimists are more likely than pessimists to be involved in automobile accidents (because they don't give themselves enough time to get to where they're going, and end up speeding). People who play sports are obviously at risk for a variety of athletic injuries—but they are less likely than other people to develop gallstones. Drinking lots of coffee increases blood pressure but decreases the risk of Parkinson's disease.

Do Americans pay too much attention to risk? That's the indictment one frequently hears. Not only are we risk-obsessed, but we have a warped idea of the relative incidence of various kinds of calamity. Terrorism, SARS, anthrax—these things are statistically inconsequential but a cause of national panic, whereas common household stairs are responsible for more than a million hospital visits each year in America. Ropeik and Gray, as knowledgeable and prudent a pair as you will find, cite "a wide gap between what the public and the 'experts' think is actually dangerous" and what may in fact be relatively safe.

They certainly have a point. And yet it's hard to imagine that without a hair-trigger sensitivity toward risk, America would ever have taken the lead in perfecting one of modern civilization's acknowledged glories: the insurance industry. The idea of insurance goes back many thousands of years (it's mentioned in the Code of Hammurabi, which seems to have anticipated everything). Insurance of various kinds gained traction, almost as a form of gam-

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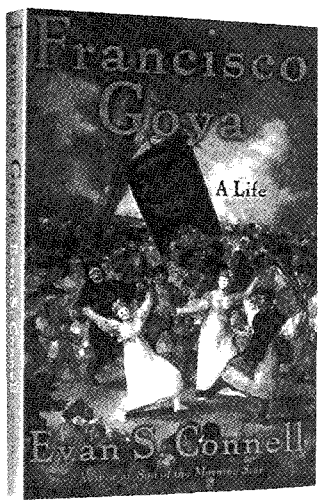

Francisco Goya
A LIFE
Evan S. Connell

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By now virtually anything can be insured. Dolly Parton, Jennifer Lopez, Tina Turner, Betty Grable, Fred Astaire—the insurance industry has been involved in underwriting economically consequential body parts for all of these people. Surgeons insure their hands, soccer players their feet, chefs their taste buds. And there is plenty of room to grow in this direction, toward the insuring of ever more ineffable competencies. Could Roger Ebert take out insurance against the sudden loss of critical faculties? Or Donald Rumsfeld against a catastrophic lapse in judgment? There's no reason why policies like these couldn't be written (although underwriters would want to be wary of "prior conditions").

Indeed, insurance against loss of love already exists, in the form of the pre-nuptial agreement. The pre-nup (also anticipated in the Code of Hammurabi) doesn't lend itself to hard data—no government agency collects statistics on its prevalence. But the book *How to Write Your Own Premarital Agreement* was for a time the No. 1 best seller on Amazon's list of books about marriage. Another surefire best seller, I bet, would be a "greatest hits" collection of actual prenuptial agreements. The Los Angeles divorce lawyer Robert Nachshin has drafted pre-nups calling for the random drug testing of a spouse and stipulating that a spouse not watch more than one football game on Sundays. The prenuptial agreement between Michael Douglas and Catherine Zeta-Jones reportedly entitles her to $5 million for any act of infidelity on Douglas's part. Although the actual terms of the pre-nup signed by Jennifer Lopez and Ben Affleck have not been divulged, the *Daily Star*, a London tabloid, has reported that Lopez, too, imposed a multimillion-dollar fine in the event of her husband's infidelity. She also demanded sexual relations at least once every two days. According to the *Star*, J. Lo's mother urged that the agreement be signed "in blood."

What all of this is about, probably, is our Manichaean attitude toward the unknown. Risk is the engine of an entrepreneurial economy, and Americans accept it as a way of life. But we are also a practical people, proud of our can-do spirit and our ability to look ahead sensibly. We want to know the score. We can take anything, as long as you give it to us straight.

Wouldn't it be useful, then, if officials at the National Institutes of Health, perhaps in conjunction with experts at the Department of Homeland Security, got to work on a vast, computerized master algorithm of all known risk factors—the Hell-gorithm, as it might be called? The mathematician Pierre-Simon Laplace once asserted that if one simply had enough data, it should theoretically be possible to calculate the future of the universe. Creating the Hell-gorithm would be a far easier task.

The aim would be to compile a complete database of all risk correlations. A user would fill out a detailed questionnaire, revealing, say, that he is a short toothless smoker whose father was diabetic, whose mother lived to be a hundred, who drinks two glasses of red wine and five cups of coffee a day, who worked as a cabbie while in college and flies in commercial aircraft once a week, who always wears a seat belt in the car but talks on his cell phone while driving.

Based on these and hundreds of other variables the Hell-gorithm would crunch the numbers and come up with a personalized "risk-load assessment." The information could be delivered like the SAT, as a numerical score. (You might even get 200 points just for being alive.) A more user-friendly approach would enlist familiar voices to deliver the news about one's lifestyle.

"James, it's too risky," Denise Richards might purr.

In all too many cases, of course, the verdict would best be conveyed by someone else entirely: "*Hasta la vista*, baby." ▲

Cullen Murphy is The Atlantic*'s managing editor.*

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SPORT

A BEAUTIFUL MIND

As the Philadelphia Eagles' Hank Fraley demonstrates, the behemoth who snaps the ball must also be one of the most mentally nimble players on the field

BY MARK BOWDEN

.....

If you take a walk around Lincoln Financial Field, Philadelphia's new football stadium, half an hour before game time, you will find a summary history of the city's seventy-year-old NFL franchise in the jerseys worn by its fans. Many old-timers still wear the team's traditional kelly green, a cheerful shade that matched the infamous synthetic turf in Veterans Stadium—the much reviled gigantic concrete bowl, home to Philadelphia's pro baseball and football teams for thirty-one years, that sits brooding, empty, and forsaken across Pattison Avenue, awaiting its date with implosion. Marking that old era you'll find jerseys bearing the numbers of retired heroes such as Harold Carmichael (17), Bill Bergey (66), Ron Jaworski (7), Randall Cunningham (12), Seth Joyner (59), Jerome Brown (99), Reggie White (92), and a multitude of others. Nine years ago the team's current owner, Jeffrey Lurie, began remaking the franchise, and one of his first changes was to chuck the cheerful green for a more à la mode shade. (We live in a period that disdains bold colors.) So now a metallic teal predominates among the masses who move into position before a game. Just about every starting player on the current Eagles roster is represented, from the obvious ones—quarterback Donovan McNabb (5) and running back Duce Staley (22)—to receivers, defensive backs, kickers, linebackers, and even linemen. The scarcest jersey numbers are those of offensive linemen, but even they are here. Pro-bowl tackles Jon Runyan (69) and Tra Thomas (72) are represented, as are guards Jermane Mayberry (71) and John Welbourn (76). But search as you might, and I have searched high and low, you will be hard-pressed to find one among these thousands sporting the number 63, worn by Hank Fraley.

This despite the fact that Fraley has started almost every Eagles game for the past three seasons, and has handled the ball on at least three fourths of the team's offensive plays during that period—the most successful stretch of football the Eagles have played in more than twenty years. He played a critical role in orchestrating most of those plays. He was rewarded for his skills last year with a $1.4 million signing bonus and a five-year, million-dollar-a-year contract extension—precisely the kind of deal sought in vain by Staley, the Eagles' star running back.

Fraley is the center. He is the guy who squats and offers his wide rear end to the quarterback before almost every offensive play, who snaps the ball into the star's hands and then braces himself to be run over. He has never scored a touchdown. He has never passed, kicked, caught, or carried the football in a game—not in high school, college, or the NFL. Not once.

He doesn't look like a professional athlete. He weighs more than 300 pounds. Even when he's wearing shoulder pads, his middle is the widest part of his body. He looks soft. His midsection spills over the stretched elastic waist of his skintight white-and-silver uniform pants. It is not a pretty sight. Even in the ever rounder, oversized, overweight world of football linemen,

ROBERT BURKE

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Fraley seems especially doughy. And the impression comes from more than just his physique. He has a mildness, a sweetness of character, that goes with the softness of his body. His teammates dubbed him "Honeybuns," or "Buns," after a practice session in his rookie season when he was beset by a stubborn bumblebee, which prompted Tra Thomas to joke that he must be "sweet as a honeybun." He has small, narrow eyes of pale green, a pug nose, and pouty lips. These features are all pinched at the center of a broad, flat, pink landscape of cheeks and neck. His chin is little more than a lightly cupped shadow in the great roundness that rises from the neck of his jersey. Even his wan stubble of fair beard fails to suggest so much as a hint of jawline.

Fraley likes to come out to the field early on game day, hours before kickoff. It calms him. There is something cathedral-like about the empty stadium in the pregnant calm before game time: the lush flat rectangle of pampered, perfect grass, carefully manicured and lined, is surrounded by towering walls of silent seats. It is thrilling to stand at the center of such a monumental space, and humbling. Small flocks of pigeons soar in sudden graceful fits in the empty enclosure. High above, the big gray undersides of commercial jets slide low across the framed patch of sky on their approach to nearby Philadelphia International Airport. The new stadium has an airy feel, as though it were constructed from ropes and cloth instead of concrete and steel. It is the boldest achievement yet in Lurie's ongoing makeover of the Eagles, and is such an aesthetic triumph that many locals worry it may be *too* nice—that it doesn't feel like blue-collar Philly and could ruin the team's surly, working-class image. Fraley has no such worries. He spends much of his time on the field crashing into that turf, and he appreciates the more yielding texture of real grass, even if it is threaded with millions of green-plastic strands to make it more durable.

On September 14, the Eagles played the New England Patriots in the second regular-season game played at Lincoln Financial Field. The Eagles had christened the new facility the Monday before, with a gaudy celebration before a national ABC-TV audience, and then had executed a humiliating swan dive, losing 17–0 to the reigning Super Bowl champions, the Tampa Bay Buccaneers.

The loss sent the team's local critics, on radio and TV and in print, into awful spasms of doubt and blame, but it didn't especially rile Fraley and his teammates. They always hate to lose, but it was, after all, only the first of sixteen games. They had been defeated by the league's top-ranked team, and the game had actually been close the whole way. Fraley was concerned mostly about three passing plays in which he had found himself disastrously out of position.

Three times he had left a wide opening off his right hip for Tampa's star defensive tackle, Warren Sapp. The first time he was out of position, he had gotten lucky. Sapp had had an opening to Fraley's right but had gone left. But the second and third times, Sapp had shot right past him, charged into the backfield, and disrupted the play. Mistakes like that can lose a close football game—and if uncorrected, can end a career. He knew Sapp was fast enough to beat even the league's best blocker sometimes; but for it to have happened three times meant that there was something wrong with Fraley's technique. He left the locker room that night wondering what it was.

Two days later, after devouring a small alp of food in the cafeteria of the Eagles' practice facility, Fraley filled another plate and retired to a classroom to study the game tapes in slow motion. In each of those plays he was supposed to have snapped the ball and then stepped back immediately with his right foot, pivoted left, and prepared to absorb Sapp's charge. But in all three plays, he noticed, after snapping the ball he had taken not one long step back with his right foot but two short steps—the first more like a little hop. Despite their manly job descriptions, offensive linemen are a bit like the dancing hippos in *Fantasia*. Footwork is as careful and deliberate for them as for a ballerina. Fraley tries to perfect his footwork every day, in practice and at home. So it was frustrating to watch himself unconsciously ad-libbing a hop into the movement. Where had that come from? He hadn't even been aware that he was doing it, but it had been enough to give Sapp the advantage. In the week leading up to the Patriots game, Fraley practiced at home to restore the proper rhythm: snap, long step back with the right foot, pivot left, brace.

Playing center is one of the most important jobs in football. It involves a lot more than just hiking and blocking. In the seconds between leaving the huddle and snapping the ball, the center must evaluate the defensive formation he sees in light of the play just called. He must anticipate what the defense is going to do—say, blitz a linebacker or a safety, or try some stunt—and then adjust the blocking assignments to cope with it. Donovan McNabb, the Eagles' star quarterback, studies game tapes all week with Fraley, and the two work together closely on the field. "Hank and I work as a team," McNabb says. "Everything that people see me do starts with Hank." While the center is making adjustments to the blocking scheme, shouting out changes in code, the quarterback is shouting out his own changes to running backs and receivers —or he may change the play altogether. Each must listen to the other. Fraley has to be alert to the changes called by the quarterback, and vice versa. All of this takes place in the seconds before every offensive play, often in a stadium roaring with noise, before a defense that is deliberately trying to disguise its intentions. "Hank's calls influence a lot," says McNabb. "Suppose I see that we don't have enough blockers to handle everyone coming at me. If Hank makes a check to counter that, and I miss it, I'll ending up throwing hot"—dumping the ball quickly to a predesignated "hot" receiver—"when I'm protected." In that scenario McNabb's hot pass not only aborts the called play but will also probably go to a receiver who is not expecting the ball.

But as important as the center's position is, it is also peculiarly invisible. The eyes of everyone watching a football game move away from the center the very second he snaps the ball, and except for the linemen who battle with

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and against him, hardly anyone notices where he ends up when the play is over. Usually it's in a bruising heap. His is arguably the most difficult and least rewarding role in all of sport. What center is ever featured in a highlights reel unless he makes a big mistake? What center has ever been carried off the field by his triumphant teammates after a big win?

In recreational football the offensive line is a repository for boys too fat, too slow, or too awkward to be trusted with the ball. Many an aspiring footballer has quit the game forever after a few days of getting ignominiously knocked around in practice. Once you become a blocker, the only glory you will ever taste is team glory.

Dave Alexander, who played center for the Eagles a decade ago, now coaches his two sons in recreational football back in Tulsa, Oklahoma. They are big, like their father—"destined for the line the day they first walked on the field," he says with a fatherly chuckle. "And the thing that strikes me is, when the team scores a touchdown, there's nobody on the field who is happier than they are. For linemen, it's not about people slapping you on the back or having your name announced on the loudspeaker, it's about making the numbers change on the scoreboard. It's weird, but even after all the years I played, I never fully appreciated that until now." A quarterback, a running back, a receiver, a linebacker, a cornerback, a safety, or even a defensive lineman can dazzle the crowd, even in a losing effort. Players in these other positions can amass all-star statistics: touchdowns, sacks, interceptions, tackles. Not an offensive lineman. If the team loses, he loses. And of all the jobs on the offensive line, center is the least desirable, at least when one is starting out. Among other things, don't forget, the center is the guy who has to let the quarterback lay hands on the underside of his butt—a matter whose awkwardness for teenage boys cannot be overestimated. So the job attracts big, sturdy boys who aren't easily embarrassed, or who are willing to swallow a little ridicule in order to make the team. Many a star football player pays lip service to the principle of Team First; but for the big man at center, the team is all there is.

The terms "offensive" and "defensive" are misleading when they refer to linemen. Along the line of scrimmage defensive linemen essentially play offense, in that their job is to attack, to go after the man with the ball; offensive linemen play defense. On the snap of the ball defensive linemen cut loose with everything they've got, using strength, speed, and cunning to avoid blockers and make the tackle. Defensive linemen tend to be intimidating men—loud, fast, and emotional. They live by furious blasts of effort, launching themselves toward the opposing team's backfield. Offensive linemen have a more placid, controlled nature; they tend to be neither glory seekers nor hotheads. Their job is to absorb the onslaught. The keys to their success are not fury and cunning but footwork and balance. Because he is in charge, the center usually epitomizes these traits. On most football teams he is the least mercurial man on the roster. And, in contrast to the stereotype of the big dumb football player, at the pro level the center's role demands a high degree of self-possession and analytical skill.

Of all pro football players, offensive linemen are the least likely to be taken for athletes off the field. Fraley likes to wow pickup players on the racquetball court, where he proves surprisingly nimble. He doesn't always tell his humbled opponents what he does for a living.

Stan Walters, the pro-bowl tackle in the Eagles' one Super Bowl appearance (1981, a loss to the Oakland Raiders) was the same. He moved with his family to a suburb of Atlanta years after he retired, and was washing his car one weekend afternoon when a group of men from his neighborhood, with no idea of his past, invited him to join them in a game of touch football.

"It was the first time I had played football since I played for the Eagles," Walters told me recently. "I had a ball. I hadn't had so much fun playing football since I was a kid. I was running the ball, kicking it, knocking guys on their asses, throwing touchdown passes, catching touchdown passes. And on the

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way home a couple of guys were walking up the road from me when one of them turns to his buddy and says, 'Man, that fat guy can really play!'"

None of Fraley's old coaches—from his high school team, in the Maryland suburbs of Washington, or from his team at Robert Morris University, a small school near Pittsburgh, where he played Division I-AA college ball—envisioned him as future pro. Neither did the NFL. He wasn't drafted by any pro team out of college. In the highly specialized world of professional football, at about 300 pounds he was considered too small to be a guard, and at six-two was considered too short (and short-armed) to play offensive tackle—a job that requires handling the outside rush of defensive ends, some of the fastest and most powerful big men in the game. He made it onto the Eagles by impressing the coaches with his intelligence and work ethic, qualities that especially appeal to the team's head coach, the massively rotund Andy Reid, himself a former offensive lineman. The team reflects Reid's personality, which is—well, bovine. He is a resolute nonconductor of electricity. Winning for Reid is strictly method, not magic. When he was interviewed for the job, he arrived with a three-ring binder that spelled out in precise detail his method for building a championship team. He had been working on it for years. Reid likes players who share his calm, workmanlike approach—and no one conforms better than Fraley, who even looks like a younger version of his head coach.

Fraley stays late to study tapes with both the offensive line and the quarterbacks, and then takes the tapes home at night. He memorizes formations and tendencies, and scours the images for clues to his opponents' intentions. Players often develop subtle habits that give away what they intend to do; sometimes linebackers will set their feet differently if they plan to blitz, or linemen will lean slightly in the direction they intend to charge. Fraley knows from personal experience how unconscious this is. In his rookie year he had the habit of drumming his fingers lightly on the ball during the snap count until it was time to hike it. Hollis Thomas, one of the

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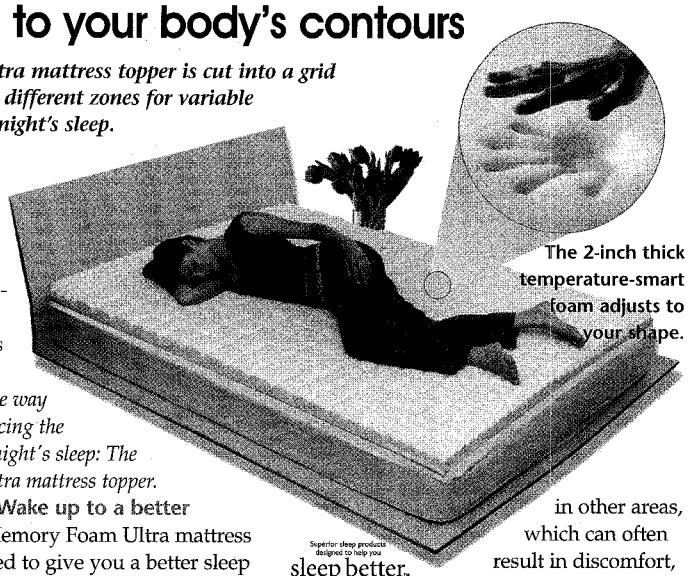

Now, one of the world's leading manufacturers of foam products has developed an incredibly affordable mattress topper that can actually change the way you sleep. Introducing the future of a better night's sleep: The Memory Foam Ultra mattress topper.

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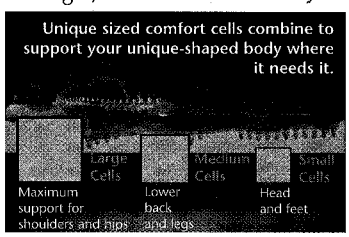

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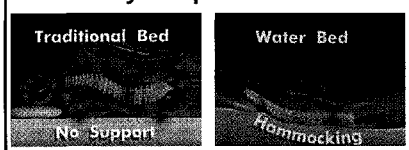

The ideal position is a neutral body posture in which the different parts of the human body are supported individually and evenly. This is the secret behind Memory Foam Ultra, the mattress topper that turns any bed into the ideal sleep surface.

Eagles' defensive linemen, had kindly pointed it out.

"Look, kid," he told Fraley. "As soon as those fingers stop, I know you're going to hike the ball. It gives me an extra second on every play."

On his ritual visit to the field before the Patriots game, Fraley spent a few minutes stretching in the end zone with Jon Runyan, and then the two sat and talked awhile. A light drizzle was falling. When Runyan headed back to the locker room, Fraley walked, as he always does, to one of the end zones. He tapped the metal goalpost twice and repeated a personal incantation: "It's going to be a great day, a great game."

By game time the swirling clouds and drizzle had given way to a sunny, steamy afternoon. The stands were filled with stomping, cheering fans. The loudspeakers blared music and pre-game announcements as Fraley did his last-minute footwork drills and went through a couple of snaps with McNabb.

From a media booth high above, Phil Simms, the CBS-TV color man, surveyed the playing field with Greg Gumbel, the play-by-play man. Setting up the context for the game, noting that both teams had lost their opener, Simms said, "The week of suffering is almost over for both teams."

Fraley's assignment against the Patriots was to block the giant nose tackle, Ted Washington, who is listed at 365 pounds but weighs closer to 400. It's hard to imagine a 310-pound man looking overmatched, but when Fraley squatted for the first snap with Washington leaning directly over him, he looked small.

All his nerves settled down after the initial crash of pads and the first hard tumble. Fraley likes the feeling of hitting and getting hit. It wakes him up. His team's opening drive faltered on a couple of dropped passes, and it wasn't until the second Eagles offensive series that the team made a big play. On the third down, with nine yards to go, Eagles tight end Chad Lewis caught a pass for a big gain and a first down on New England's half of the field—but there was a flag.

Emerging from the huddle before

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the play, Fraley had seen Patriots linebacker Tedy Bruschi sneaking up to blitz. Fraley had shouted out a protection scheme that called for him to pick up the linebacker, and for the left guard, John Welbourn, to slide right and pick up the nose tackle, now Jarvis Green (giving Washington a break). But on the snap of the ball Green had charged to his right, into Fraley, who, turning to block Bruschi, was caught off balance. He rolled his ankle, and went sprawling backwards. When Fraley fell, Green crashed down on him like a man who has been charging a door that is suddenly flung open.

Fraley heard the roar of the crowd as Lewis made the catch, but then spotted the yellow flag alongside his knee. He knew how the play had looked to the ref: as though the center had grabbed Green's jersey as he fell, yanking the nose tackle down with him—which might actually have been a smart move. He pulled himself up on one knee and pleaded with the ref, "I wasn't holding!"

To no avail. In the mess of action on the line of scrimmage, appearance is always reality.

"Looks like it's going to come back," Gumbel said.

The penalty wiped out the first down and any sense of momentum, and left the team with nineteen yards to go for a first down. The loudspeaker boomed out Fraley's name as the offending player, and the CBS camera, for the first time in the game, zeroed in on the center, his hands on his hips, seething.

"That's the center, Hank Fraley," Simms said—one of only two times Fraley was recognized in the broadcast of the game.

CBS ran a replay that clearly showed Fraley had not grabbed Green. But neither Simms nor Gumbel noted it. Patriots safety Rodney Harrison shouted across at Fraley, "Cheap-shot artist!"

"Fuck you," Fraley said.

The Eagles failed to get a first down and finished the first quarter trailing the Patriots 3–0. The hometown crowd was starting to boo. But the Eagles came right back in the second quarter, driving the ball down the field sixty-five yards in eight plays, to the Patriots' two-yard line. Fraley helped steer the drive with furious effort, orchestrating the grunt work that most often makes a play succeed or fail: reading New England's defenses; shouting "Jam! Jam!" to alert the line to an overloaded defensive front; designating the "mike," or middle linebacker (which, given the various ways New England's defense lines up, can be a different player each time); shouting "Fan!" to signal a scheme of sliding blocks that might send the two players on his left in one direction and himself with the two players on his right in another. On this drive everything seemed to work, even a missed block. When Eagles running back Brian Westbrook swept around the left end, Hank slipped his block and raced after him. He lunged in vain at a linebacker, who deftly sidestepped him, and crashed emptily to earth. He was struggling to his feet when another Patriots player accidentally ran smack into him and went flying several yards farther upfield, landing upside down.

Fraley's fellow lineman Welbourn helped the center to his feet. "I saw you down, so I ran my guy right into you," he explained, grinning.

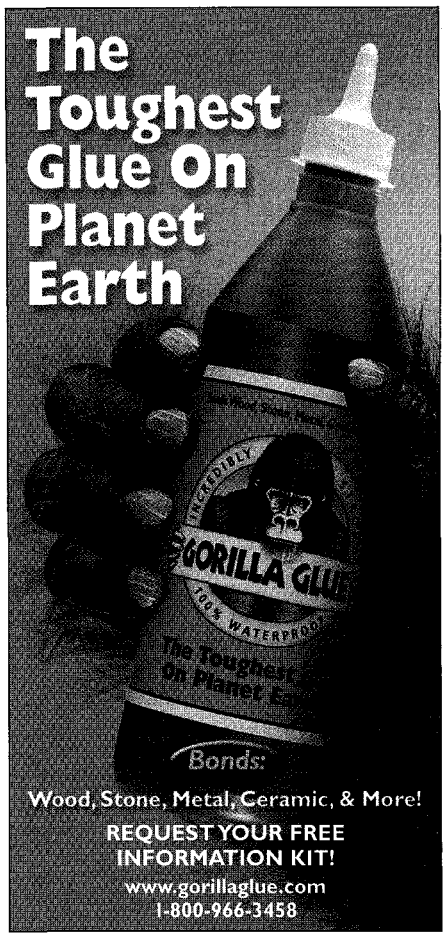
The downed Patriots player pointed at Fraley menacingly, as if to say, *That was an unfair hit, sixty-three, and I'm going to remember you.*

The drive led to a critical third-down play just two yards from the goal line. This is where offensive and defensive linemen are suddenly the most visibly important players on the field. The CBS cameras now focused and lingered on big Ted Washington.

"It's hard to run up the middle when you play the New England Patriots when Ted Washington is inside," Simms said. "Number ninety-two. Bill Belichick [the Patriots' head coach] says he's just a boulder. You got to double-team him at least. So that's why when you see the Eagles run it, most likely when he's in there, they're gonna try to go outside."

"He's a classic nose guard," Gumbel said.

"I think what people don't understand is that this is not a fat guy," Simms said. "He's six-foot-five, three hundred and sixty pounds, he's pretty athletic, and he is tremendous at stopping the running game up the middle."



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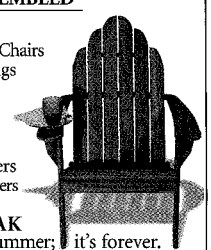
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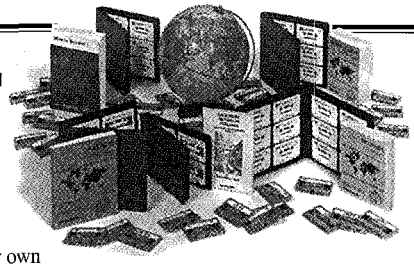

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As is often the case, the announcers were dead wrong about what was coming. Reid, speaking by radio to McNabb, called a running play right up the middle, and it proved to be the perfect call. New England's defense had guessed wrong. Betting that the Eagles would not run right at Washington, they planned to execute an "out charge." Fraley spotted it instantly. The Patriots' two nose tackles, Washington and Ty Warren, at the center of their six-man front, slanted outward in opposite directions, leaving only the middle linebacker, Roman Phifer, to handle whatever happened to come straight up the middle. The Eagles' play called for fullback Jon Ritchie to precede Duce Staley into the hole, knocking the linebacker out of the way so that Staley could sail into the end zone.

At the snap Washington lunged, as expected, to Fraley's right, and Warren to his left. Fraley threw himself at Warren, knocking both of them to the ground. Washington went down, hit by the two blockers on the left side of the line. Ritchie nailed Phifer, but the Patriots linebacker managed to break free and grab Staley before he crossed the goal line. The running back and the linebacker collided and were stymied, a meeting of equal and opposite forces. They teetered near the line. Fraley rose to one knee and threw himself into the two men; they all fell over the goal line.

The referee's arms shot straight up. On the ground in a pile of tangled players, Fraley heard the crowd erupt with joy. "Touchdown!" Gumbel shouted. "The Eagles put some points on the board for the first time this season, and take the lead."

Fireworks exploded overhead, and a great guttural roar shook the stadium. The state-of-the-art sound system blasted out the Eagles' fight song. Staley danced off with the ball, and the cameras and announcers celebrated him. Fraley pulled himself off the pile and got ready to block for the extra point. The kick sailed between the uprights, and the center trotted off the field, unnoticed and elated. He was greeted with high fives on the sidelines, and McNabb slapped him gleefully on his helmet. The team knew Staley hadn't scored by himself.

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This proved to be the high point of the afternoon for the Eagles and their fans. The Patriots went on to score two touchdowns in succession, taking a 17–7 lead by halftime. As the sun began to set behind the upper tier of the stands, its light replaced by the gentler glare of stadium lights, the Eagles' hopes were fading. Their offense not only wasn't scoring but was continually failing to manage even a first down. The boos grew louder and louder.

On one third-down play late in the game Fraley hit his man, fell to the ground, rolled, and saw the ball drop a few feet away; an attacking linebacker had knocked it from McNabb's hands. Fraley leaped for it. Deep in a pile of wrestling big men, scrambling for the loose ball, he grabbed hold of something and pulled. It turned out to be the helmet of a Patriots player. In the melee he did finally get his hands on the football. It's not unusual for the ball to change hands several times at the bottom of such a seething pile before the referee can untangle the players and declare which team has legitimate possession. Often possession falls to whoever has the ball last. Fraley gripped the ball tight. Patriots defensive lineman Richard Seymour reached under Fraley's jersey and grabbed a fistful of his ample flesh (he would have a purple welt after the game), trying to force him to release the ball. There was punching, kicking, gouging. "You don't want to be there," Fraley would say later. By the time Fraley saw daylight again, the referee had concluded that the rightful owner of the fumbled ball was Patriots defensive end Willie McGinest, and was shouting "Blue ball! Blue ball!"

"Aw, ref," Fraley complained. "He never even had it."

It was an omen. The Patriots scored another touchdown. The Eagles managed a field goal in the fourth quarter, closing the gap to 24–10, but all hope died when a McNabb pass was intercepted by Bruschi, who ran it back eighteen yards for another New England touchdown.

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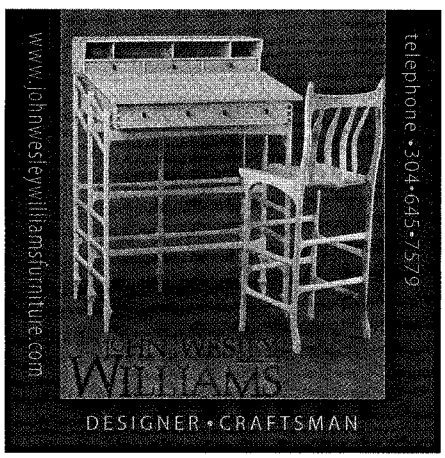

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only five minutes left to play, the Eagles were still battling. Their pride was on the line—as were their jobs. When a player stops trying, even in the hopeless final moments of a loss, it will be obvious on the game tapes. To be branded a quitter is a quick ticket to waivers. Very few pro football players feel any sense of job security. For all the affection of his coaches and teammates, and despite his generous contract extension, Fraley always feels he's only one or two bad games away from being on the bench—or even out of football altogether. Letting down also brings the risk of injury. In the final minutes of a blowout the winning team's defense often turns up the intensity, seeing a chance to run up its stats. A sack, a tackle, or an interception in the final minutes of a rout looks just as good on the score sheet as one earlier in the game.

Reveling in success, seeing the disappointment on the faces of the Eagles, some of the Patriots tried to further demoralize them.

"You suck!" one linebacker repeatedly shouted at the Eagles' offensive line. Others joined in: "You guys are overrated!" "Y'all have lost a step—you're getting old!"

The incorrect holding call at the beginning of the game continued to haunt Fraley. "Cheap-shot artist!" a linebacker shouted at him again. At the end of one play the whistle blew in time to stop a charging linebacker from blind-siding Fraley at the knees. "Hey, sixty-three, you know I was coming for you," the player taunted.

Long before this, Eagles fans had started leaving, and wide expanses of empty seats expressed the home town's disgust. The final minutes of the 31–10 disaster were attended by only a few thousand spectators, most of whom appeared to be staying in order to heckle and jeer.

After the game a cloud of gloom hung in the steamy twilight of the Eagles' locker room. The team's big-name players lingered in the showers, hoping that the waiting horde of reporters and cameras might thin or give up entirely. In a corner Fraley slowly pulled on his big boxer shorts and then his blue jeans. He was bruised, stiff, and tired. His thigh hurt, he had a purpling welt on his side, and he had strained something in his ankle when he fell over in the first quarter.

"I've got to get that checked out," he said glumly.

After a victory offensive linemen can get trampled in the locker room by packs of reporters chasing down the players who made the big plays. But though the star players speak for the team in victory, in defeat sometimes the big, easygoing linemen are the only players willing to stare down the cameras and take the questions without rancor. By the time Fraley had his pants on, the pack had gathered. His face was still pink from the shower, and he squinted in the bright camera lights.

"How does it feel to start off losing two in a row?" one reporter asked.

"I don't think we're doubting ourselves," Fraley said, stiff and serious. "If you doubt yourself, you start to panic, and if you panic, you don't play well. We just have to execute on offense."

He was asked about the poor offensive showing, and about the second sub-par performance by Donovan McNabb. More lights flicked on. Fraley mopped the sweat off his brow.

"I'm just going to have to look and see what I can do better," he said, diplomatically avoiding passing judgment on his teammate.

When the reporters realized that Fraley was too self-possessed to say anything remotely newsworthy, they abruptly clicked off their lights and headed for Chad Lewis, who had dropped a couple of big passes.

Fraley was left to finish stuffing his bag with his gear. After glancing up over his big shoulder at the reporters, he winked at me and smiled.

"Man," he said, "am I ever hungry."

(Despite the depths of doubt and disbelief reached by the team's fans and the media after these two opening losses, the Eagles won nine of their next ten games.) ▲

Mark Bowden, a national correspondent for The Atlantic, *is the author of six books, including* Black Hawk Down *(1999) and* Killing Pablo *(2001). His "The Dark Art of Interrogation" was* The Atlantic's *cover story in October.*

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TIM TOMKINSON

FICTION

AN INCOMPLETE MAP OF THE NORTHERN POLARITY

If you were to ask George why he loves Margaret, he would say, "Because she's so mean to me"

BY NATHAN ROBERTS

.....

Please answer the following questions completely and with attention to detail; explain your answers and give examples. Use reverse side if necessary.

- **What household tasks do you do?** *My housekeeping tends to be project-based. Sometimes the standard vacuum-floor and do-laundry projects, but also such things as stripping paint off walls and removing furniture from premises. Sometimes I tend to let things like basic cleanliness fall off, leave food to rot, concentrate instead on "larger" tasks. I recently installed a pull-up bar in my closet.*

Day one. A woman is speaking to him through his receiver. Answering the phone seems like such an obvious thing, but sometimes George forgets how it works: *ring—pick up—Hello—I'm talking on the telephone.* The woman's name is Lynda, and she's calling from Citibank. She says, "Listen, George, can I ask you a personal question?" Lynda's voice has an edge this afternoon. Of all the people who call George, Lynda is usually the kindest. Normally she asks, "How are you, dear?" or "Is everything okay?" before getting down to business. Now George sits through Lynda's pause and clenches the cord between his teeth in the uncertain half hope that it will electrocute him. She asks, "What color is the sky in your world?"

George holds the telephone away from his ear and thinks. He takes this question seriously, feeling he should answer it correctly. Usually George's conversations with Lynda have to do with money, which isn't much fun to talk about but at least has the advantage of being straightforward. This new question seems complex—philosophical, epistemological, meteorological—and is almost certain to be a trick. "I don't know," he says. He honestly doesn't.

He hangs up the phone.

- **Do you have difficulty getting these tasks done?** *Yes.* **If so, please describe these difficulties.** *It's often very challenging for me to do household chores as simple as washing dishes. The cycle may sound familiar: I feel bad, so I don't wash, but not washing makes me feel worse. I've started buying paper plates, but even those fester when the garbage isn't taken out. Maggots appear.*

Taped to the receiver is a sign in neat calligraphy that reads *Do Not Answer.* George can't seem to take even his own advice.

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FOR THE FIRST TIME, PERHAPS, A TENABLE HISTORY OF JESUS

It won't be found in the Bible. Critical examination of the New Testament Gospels reveals sloppy history, perhaps deliberately deceptive, giving a picture of Jesus more imaginative than factual. Most Christians seem not to notice or care---transcendentalism spins its own reality. But true realists, for whom historical accuracy matters, may be pleased with what the recently discovered *Gospel of Thomas* provides: 113 notes taken down by Thomas of perplexing things Jesus said. Such notes were probably made at the times they were heard and have not suffered alteration ---the best kind of source for a history.

Jack Hannah in ***You Will Not Taste Death: Jesus and Epicureanism*** recognizes the notes as chronologically ordered and correlative with the skeletal history used in the *Gospel of Mark*. Hannah provides all the text of *Thomas* and all Marcan context, and upon this develops a narrative about Jesus that is tenably historical.

This *historical* Jesus based his teaching on the Epicurean philosophy; e.g. in place of Judaism's practices of fasting, praying, almsgiving, and obeying food laws, this *historical* Jesus said, "Tell no lie and do not do what you hate."

This *historical* Jesus never mentioned devil, demons, or hell. And the most radical influence of Epicureanism on Jesus' thought was that God and Caesar are man-made authorities and that one's ultimate authority should be oneself.

Hannah's book is 321 pgs., pbk., $12 postpaid.
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He stands. Something is different inside his apartment. He examines the walls, which are bare, the Sheetrock exposed. The beige carpet has been worn to a near brown; half of it has been torn up, revealing a hardwood floor, the nails of which have started to work their way out. A patch of flooring has been sanded down and the nails hammered back in. The door to each room—bedroom, kitchen, and bathroom—has been removed from its hinges. Only the front door remains. No, nothing has changed inside George's apartment. Something is different inside his head. Now that he's noticed it, he knows it's been there, nagging quietly, for several weeks. Trips to the doctor are supposed to make you better, not worse. To which of the earth's magnetic poles, he wonders, is my mind about to wander? Northern movement can be such an advantage (social bravado, home-improvement inspirations), whereas during a trip south he's usually encamped in his bed for the duration. There be dragons here.

- **Does anyone help you?** *No.* **If yes, how?** *N/A.*

The room is way too bright. George has seated himself on the floor, and from there he can see all the objects: paper clips, plastic Army men, complete and incomplete copies of applications for jobs and disability benefits, appeals to the unemployment people. Hanging from a fixture in the ceiling, two 100-watt bulbs illuminate the room from behind a frosted-glass screen. George reaches for a cardboard box and pulls it closer to him; he fishes around inside for his slingshot. He made it last month. The handle is fashioned from the wooden stand of a lamp he bought a few years ago at the Ikea in Seattle. The prongs are two spoons, soldered together with bulbous globs of metal. The rest of it is assembled from surgical tubing and a leather coin purse he found on the sidewalk on Hawthorne Boulevard. He arms the slingshot with a ball bearing (he has seemingly hundreds to choose from, spread around him on the floor as if in constant anticipation of a cartoon stumble), takes aim, and fires at the light. The frosted-glass screen shatters, littering the floor with tiny shards. One of the light bulbs cracks, and the filament within it dies. George looks at the floor: Army men besieged by a rain of glass.

- **Do you shop?** *Yes.* **How often and for what?** *Since I began getting my food at the local food bank, I no longer shop at grocery stores. However, I still find myself drawn to them. I spend approx. 2–5 hours a week in the supermarket, examining the products, standing and smelling the weird draft of the freezers. Every four to six months I seem to enter an acquisitive phase, during which I fill my apartment with items bought at thrift and secondhand stores. Most of the things I buy have little or no apparent value: I recently purchased a soldering iron with a corncob handle for fifty cents (I already own two of the regular kind). These acquisitive phases are usually followed by periods of expurgation.*
- **Do you have problems with shopping?** *Yes.* **Describe.** *See above.*

George sweeps the glass and the men and the ball bearings into a pile in the middle of the floor. Then he goes outside to find his truck. Since the people from Toyota started calling, George has been parking it several blocks from his building. Eventually they will find it.

Rimsky's café is hidden away and doesn't have a sign, which makes it appear to be an exclusive club. Nevertheless, it's usually pretty crowded. Classical music is always playing, sometimes a live pianist, and each table is named for a different composer. George's favorite place to sit is Rachmaninoff, but this evening two hipster kids are there, sharing a tiramisu. He takes a chair at Haydn and opens a book—two weeks past due at the Multnomah County Library—about the making of the *Oxford English Dictionary*. He's not really reading.

George has come to Rimsky's because he's in love with one of the girls who work here. He knows practically nothing about her. She's probably in her early twenties, at least ten years younger than George. He knows her name is Margaret, but he calls her Rosetta. She is what George considers a challenging beauty: she has a long nose that ends in a pointed slope; her

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eyes peer off, just slightly, in different directions; her hips seem to be on an even plane with her narrow shoulders and her widely planted feet. She carries herself with a post-teen disaffection that hangs in the air before her like a neon sign reading YOU MAY THINK I'M UGLY, BUT I THINK YOU'RE STUPID. If you were to ask George why he loves Margaret, he would say, "Because she's so mean to me." But that would be a lie. He loves her because she's mean to everyone else.

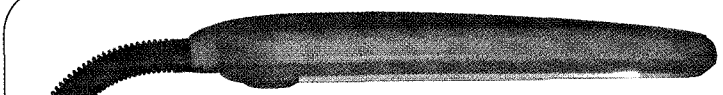
- **How often and for how long do you usually read?** *Usually, I lose concentration after fifteen or twenty minutes. Sometimes, during hypomanic phases, I'll go on "research binges," during which I'll check out several books on a single subject (fifteenth-century woodcuts, for example, or Chinese cuisine) and read them obsessively. This is rare.*

George is looking at a chapter he suspects he may have read several times before. He can't tell. Margaret is standing over him, holding a pot of coffee. Without looking up he says, "Rosetta." He says it with an accent, although he doesn't know what accent, so she's unlikely to recognize it, which probably means that he sounds like a jackass. He turns a page in his book, just for show. "Rosalee," he says. "Rosalyn."

She studies him for a moment before placing an empty cup on the table. George's appearance is in such a constant state of flux—his weight, his skin, even the color and gloss of the whites of his eyes—that from one week to the next he doesn't know how he looks unless a mirror is directly in front of him. And he can't quite remember the last time he did laundry. George wonders if he looks like a homeless man. This is followed by a moment of panic (it passes quickly; it always does), during which he wonders how soon he'll become exactly that.

"Good to see you again, George." Margaret pronounces his name deliberately, as if trying to demonstrate her ability to say proper names. "You haven't been around." He shrugs. Before lassitude became George's life, he sort of worked in a café too. He ran the coffee kiosk at a corporate campus in Beaverton.

TECHNOLOGY breakthrough



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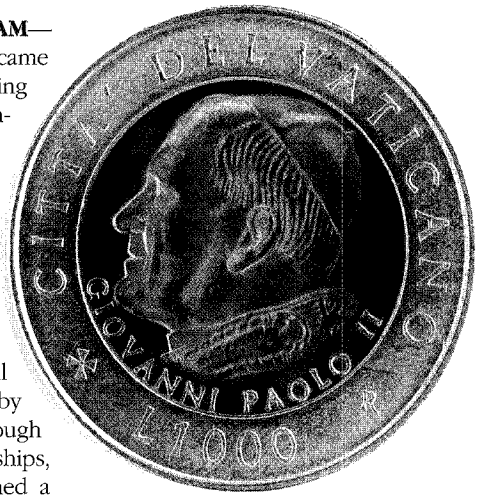

Vatican City, Tuesday 8:55 AM—25 years after John Paul II became Pope, the 1,000 Lire coins bearing his image have been officially withdrawn, the vast majority of the entire mintage has been melted down and lost forever. The only coins remaining are those few privately hoarded and saved from the melting pot. Consequently, the 1000 Lire coins of John Paul II have become instantly scarce and will be much more difficult to acquire by future collectors. Fortunately, through its European monetary relationships, the First Federal Mint has obtained a limited number of these vanished coins and is making them available, while supplies last, on a first-come first-served basis.

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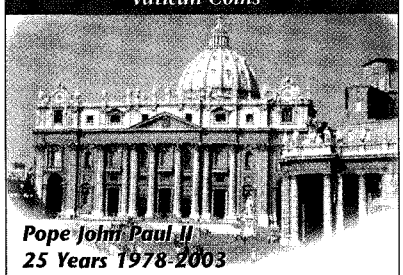

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Back then George kept a sign on the door to his apartment that said THE EDUCATED POOR. When he was fired, he changed it to read THE IMPOVERISHED. Margaret fills George's cup and says, "How will you be paying?" While still gainfully employed, George had the good sense to overtip his fellow travelers. They stopped charging him long before he stopped being able to pay. Since then he has taken advantage of his fits of energy (islands in a sea of lethargy) to create things to leave in lieu of cash. Margaret proclaimed them better than money, and has since come to demand them.

George produces a champagne cork he has decorated with pink pipe cleaners in order to make it look like a pig: it has a snout, ears, and a twisting tail. Margaret squeals when she sees it, her hands at her mouth. Then she laughs at the sound she's just made and, in laughing, snorts.

"A little piggy for my little piggy," George says.

Margaret reaches toward George in a half-hearted attempt to pinch his nipple. He parries the advance, and regrets it immediately.

- **Do you currently have any source of income?** *Yes.* **If yes, please describe.** *For a modest sum each week I clean things. Ironic, right? Given the present state of my dwelling and body, it hardly seems likely that anyone would pay me to keep things tidy.*

After leaving Rimsky's, George drives over the Morrison Bridge and onto the highway, which will take him to the office building in Southwest Portland that he cleans four nights a week. For this service he is paid $500 a month, cash. George recently received a letter from the unemployment office, the upshot of which was that his benefits were being canceled because he had been terminated from his last job for being "belligerent, hostile, or violent." The letter also asked him to return the $3,700 he'd already been paid.

George glances in his rearview mirror and sees a cop. He's terrified of being pulled over; if someone were to run his plates, all kinds of things might show up:

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unpaid parking tickets, a moving violation, several months' worth of delinquent car payments. He steers his truck into the right-hand lane, takes the first exit, and has to navigate back streets in order to get to work.

- **How well do you get along with people in authority (doctors, supervisors, police officers, etc.)? Please explain.** *Not very well.*

The building, which contains four offices, is a community of one industry: therapy. He got the lead on the job through his own doctor, a stylish and charismatic man whom George used to visit in a similar building but now has to see at a clinic downtown. The doctor has told George he's a difficult case. Since moving over to the clinic George has come to feel like a test subject. Here, take these pills, let us know if they make your ears bleed.

They do! They do!

What the four offices have in common is that credentials occupy most of the wall space: degrees, awards from alumni associations, certificates from the various regional organizations that govern the practice of headshrinking in Oregon. The pastoral counselor has the most: two walls that paint a meandering path of degree gathering (from seminary to social work), creating a hopeless rather than an academic effect.

The other thing the offices have in common is sofas: different upholstery, different shapes and levels of comfort, chosen to match décor inspired by different ethnicities, but lots and lots of sofas. George wonders sometimes whether patients actually use them. When George sees his own doctor, they face each other, both of them rigid in their chairs. Occasionally, when he has finished cleaning, George will try one of the sofas; he'll lie back and diagnose disorders in himself that make his actual problems seem minor by comparison.

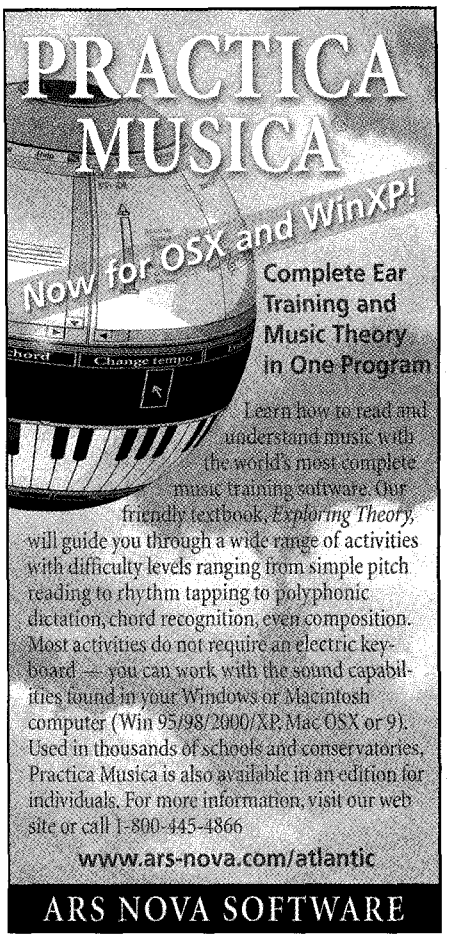
- **Describe your disability. Use an additional piece of paper if necessary.** *As you already know from the form I had to fill out in order to get this form, my current diagnosis is BP2. In the past two years I have also been diagnosed as BP1 and ADD. Wouldn't it be great if I really were BP1? Those are the guys who get shit done. Their upswings are extended and charming; their lives get made into movies, television shows; their children write memoirs. Me? I suffer from prolonged stretches of dysphoria that are about as interesting as watching a beetle flail around on its back. I used to belong to a support group, but my attendance flagged when I realized that I had nothing to say about myself other than "I'm sad."*

George is going through the desk of Myrna Heath-Smith, Ph.D. This has become part of his routine; after he cleans an office, he pokes around. Patients' files are secondary. More satisfying are the personal artifacts—diaries, outlines of conference papers, letters to and from estranged children—of the doctors themselves.

Myrna has kept a stack of Mother's Day cards, some twelve years' worth. "To the best mom ever" has transformed over time into "Sorry this is so late." She has drafted an article called "Psychologist as Self, Patient as Other," the opening line of which is "I am not a therapist, I am Therapy." The middle is all jargon, with oblique references to Lacan and Freud, but it ends "When they found my husband's body, seven months later, it showed signs of anal intrusion. The baby was already born, and I knew at that moment that psychology was my calling."

- **Since your illness, have your sleeping habits changed?** *Yes.* **If so, please explain.** *Lately I've been sleeping 12 to 16 hours each day. Some days—not to sound melodramatic or anything—I don't get out of bed at all. Prior to this period of oversleeping I had a five-day hypomanic episode during which I disavowed the need for rest, and probably slept for less than ten hours total. This led to hospitalization.*

Day two. It's past 3:00 A.M., and George has been standing in the middle of his room for nearly an hour now. He's trying to imagine the place through Margaret's eyes. It's a dump. He has left the offices immaculate, but his own home is a wreck. He tells him-



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self that he will embark on a cleaning campaign the likes of which his apartment hasn't seen since the *last* time they fucked with his meds. But George doesn't clean. He goes to his closet and pulls out cans of paint. He has a mauve, a burnt sienna, a beige, a charcoal, and a cranberry—manly colors, for the most part. He tries a wide brushstroke of each on the wall. None of them seems quite right, but he likes the calico effect they produce together, so he goes about applying small swipes of each color at irregular intervals. When he has finished with one wall, the telephone rings. It's morning.

The sign on the receiver says *Do Not Answer*.

It's Greg, from MBNA. "Hey, guy. I'm just calling to remind you about the little bit of money you owe us. Last time we talked, you told me I could be expecting a check. You're not going to tell me 'It's in the mail' again, are you?"

- **Do you have any problems getting along with friends and family?** *Yes.* **If so, please describe.** *You try filling out a nine-page form that asks you, in a dozen different ways, why you don't have any friends.*
- **While still employed, did you have trouble getting along with your supervisors and/or co-workers?** *No.* **If yes, please explain.** *I prefer to think they had trouble getting along with me.*

George was fired from the coffee kiosk in Beaverton at the request of a young executive about his own age. She came up to the kiosk one morning and said to George, "So, what are you, an artist?" She wasn't a challenging beauty. Her features were symmetrical, if a little severe, and her body was perfectly proportioned, if a little thin. Her beauty was kindergarten beauty.

"Excuse me?" George replied.

"Are you an artist?" she said. "A musician? What, then? Are you, like, a nontraditional student?"

George said, "I don't know what you're asking me."

"Why do you have this shit job?" she said. Kindergarten beauty was cruel. "What's the deal?"

Suddenly George became very angry. They say you see red when you get this mad, but George saw white. Then he saw himself from ten feet above. It wasn't the first time he'd experienced this kind of near-death anger, but this time it got him into trouble. He threw her latte at her feet and said, "I'm fucking crazy, that's the deal."

- **How often and for how long do you watch TV?** *I do not presently own a TV. Before I smashed it with a hammer, I would watch it constantly. That's why it had to go.*

There's a television in the lobby of Oregon Vocational Counseling Initiative. George is twenty minutes late for his first appointment here. Now they have him in the lobby, waiting. The television is hanging from the ceiling in a corner of the room. George and half a dozen others are all staring up at it together, their mouths slightly agape, like baby birds waiting for the mother to arrive with worms. They are watching *The Young and the Restless*.

A small, hassled woman appears through what looks like a trick door (it blends seamlessly with the wood paneling of the wall). "George," she says, "so good to meet you." She hands him a clipboard attached to which is a stack of papers and a pen that's connected to a foot-long chain. He has to use the pen at an awkward angle because the chain is too short.

When he has finished with the forms, the woman leads George through the trick door and into the bowels of OVCI. He passes a man with Down syndrome who's chewing a pencil, trying to choose from among the multiple choices on a Scantron test. A relatively normal-seeming woman is being interviewed by a man who looks like a Marine, and George watches as the expression on her face changes from serene to unsure to panicky. A middle-aged man sits in front of a giant plastic block, fitting square, round, and octagonal pegs into square, round, and octagonal holes while a woman with a stopwatch stands over him.

George points to the man with the pegs and says, "Can I take that one?" They probably call it the Spatial Reasoning Aptitude Test, George thinks. In elementary school we called it "playing."

The woman invites George to settle into an uncomfortable chair in a small office and she—his work-rehabilitation counselor—says, "The good news is, we're going to help you find a new career." It's the least they could do, he thinks. He had to fill out page after page of paperwork just to get this interview. The counselor pauses—George swallows noisily and the woman taps her long fingernails against the lacquered surface of the desk—and then says, "We'll be working with you here for a few days." George closes his eyes and tries to go to his quiet place. "Then we'll help you find a job." He opens one eye. "We offer training. Even pay for schooling, if necessary." He opens the other eye. The question of schooling seems to have diverted her; she's glancing over her files. "But first we'll start you out with a few aptitude and personality tests." George closes his eyes again. The quiet place—where did it go?

- **Has your involvement or participation in social activities changed since your illness?** *Yes/no.* **If yes, please explain.** *Let's face it, I've always been a little odd.*
- **Are you involved in any hobbies, such as fishing, bowling, sewing, swimming, handiwork, carpentry, sports, movies, hunting, or other activities?** *No.* **If yes, what are they?** *N/A.*

At Rimsky's this evening Margaret wants *two* presents. "Civil war in Guatemala. Unrest in Indonesia. Famine in Ethiopia. The price of coffee has gone up, bud."

"I could shave my head and weave you a bracelet out of hair."

She considers this. He considers her.

He doesn't find much trash to collect in the offices tonight. The vacuuming goes smoothly, and the toilets don't really need to be cleaned at all. In fact, George wonders whether the pastoral counselor, Dr. Thomas Brennan (D.D., M.S.W.), has ever once used his toilet. It's always immaculate.

George has developed a certain

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fondness for Dr. Brennan, a man he's never seen in person. He has been reading Brennan's book, chapter by chapter, since drafts of it began to appear in a wooden box beneath the doctor's desk. The book is a "topical combination of theology, philosophy, cultural criticism, and memoir," to quote from an as yet unsent letter to an agent in New York. It's called *Gay, Catholic, and Loving It!*

George takes the liberty of adding a few commas to the manuscript. Then he crosses out "topical" in the letter to the agent and replaces it, in neat printing, with "charmingly self-absorbed." Before getting in his truck to go home, he seals the letter in an envelope and puts it in a curbside mailbox.

- **Do you prepare your own meals?** *Yes.* **How often do you cook?** *5–19 times per week, depending on whether you count cereal.*

Day three. He feels super. Whatever's in these new meds, they're out of this world. George realizes that other than a few cups of coffee and some biscotti at Rimsky's, he hasn't had anything to eat in a while. He no longer needs food. Food is for animals. The kitchen is dark, and it smells like something has died in there. But who cares?

The living room is half painted in multiple colors. It's ugly; he can see that now. He finds his calligraphy pen in the pile of glass and toy soldiers and ball bearings in the middle of the floor. His mother gave him the pen when he graduated from college, ten years ago. The telephone rings. The sign says *Do Not Answer*. He lets the machine get it.

It's Brandon, from the company (so innocent-sounding, as if they might make cookies) that owns George's student loans. "Hey there, George," Brandon is saying. "This is Brandon again. That's right, I'm calling about your debt. Looks like we haven't heard from you in, gosh, about eight months. You know, a lot of programs are available for people in your position. You could apply for a forbearance—"

Something about the word "forbearance" moves George to pick up the phone. "This forbearance," he says.

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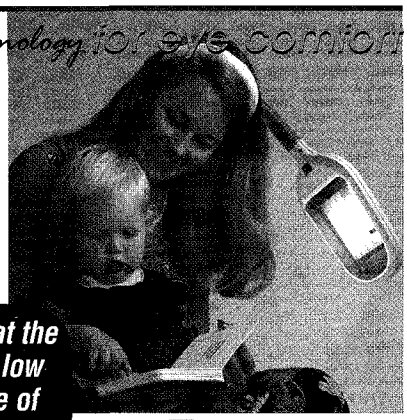

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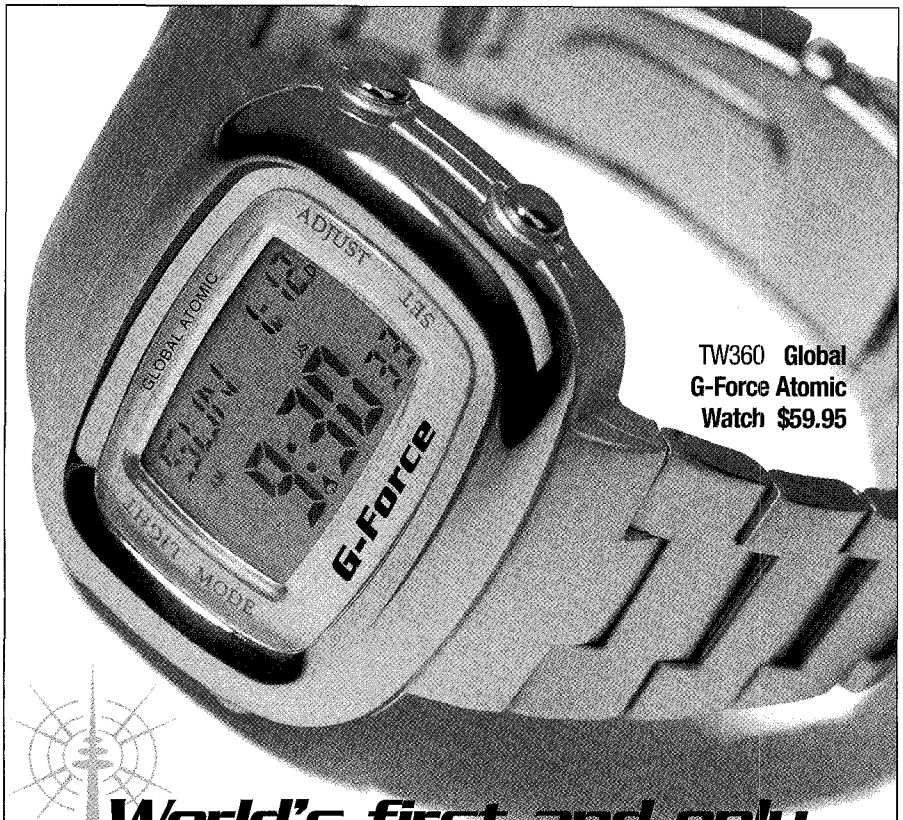

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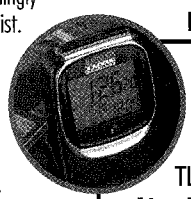

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"Would it require filling out any forms?"

"Yes, well, paperwork is required. Of course."

He hangs up.

- **Has your involvement in the household budget, bill paying, and decisions regarding major purchases changed since your illness began?** *Yes.* **Please describe below.** *I'm glad you asked. As my income diminishes, more and more people seem to be concerning themselves with how my money gets spent. Now I have doctors, pharmaceutical companies, caseworkers, the unemployment office, landlords, and bill collectors telling me how $500 should be divided. As for major purchases ... don't be silly!*

The office of Gayle Bowers, Ph.D., is tidiest of all. She even takes her clinical notes in a neat little scrawl. Her closet, on the other hand, is a wreck. Clothes are scattered around, along with empty boxes of Snackwell's cookies, and stacked on the floor are a dozen or so photo albums, each containing hundreds of pictures of women giving birth. Many are before-and-after shots; some of them show the woman holding her child, with or without extended family nearby. On every page is a shot of a baby's head crowning.

- **Have your eating habits and/or the manner in which you fix your meals changed since your illness?** *Yes.* **If yes, describe the changes.** *Stop me if you think you've heard this one before. I now do my "shopping" at the food bank. For the most part, this limits me to dried and canned food. They give me all the cereal I can carry, but nothing to eat it with. Last month, when my mother asked me what I wanted for my birthday, I asked her to buy me an industrial-size package of powdered milk.*

Day four. After several hours of test-taking at Oregon Vocational Counseling Initiative (math, verbal, logic, and personality—but still not fitting pegs into holes), George is standing in the long dinnertime line at the food bank. The man in front of him asks George if he can spare some change. Behind George is an intimidating-looking

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biker who, he discovers, is remarkably friendly. The biker asks George where he's from and how he ended up on Skid Row. George smiles at this, a man saying "Skid Row," pronouncing the actual words while standing in front of a food bank.

"Don't you think this place ought to have a salad bar?" George asks.

The biker, whose body is on the verge of buckling out of his leather vest and tight blue jeans, looks at George and for a moment says nothing. Then he raises his hand to eye level. He's holding a grimy tennis ball that has been cut halfway open and on which has been drawn, above the opening, two eyes and a nose. The man squeezes the ball, causing the mouth to open and shut, and says in a small, squeaky voice, "Vitamin C is important for overall health."

- **Are you aware of any changes in your general appearance or in your grooming or dress since becoming ill?** *Yes.* **If yes, describe the changes.** *I've learned, when I try a new drug, to expect acne, weight gain, halitosis, even a change in the odor of my urine.*

George knows Margaret's schedule by heart. He knows she's working tonight, so she should be here any minute now. He's writing on a legal pad, mostly a free association of words; just something to keep his mind focused.

Earlier today his work-rehabilitation counselor told him, "George, you have to help us help you." Then she left the room to run his tests through a machine. He found nothing to look at in her office (the walls were beige and bare), so he read the counselor's paperwork, upside-down. He made out this much: "On the day of his first appointment George showed up late and badly groomed. His odor was distinct and lasted in the offices for at least an hour after he left. It was even worse the next day, and he was wearing the same clothes."

When the counselor returned, George leaned back in his chair. Sitting, she said, "I was just glancing at your test results, George." She put several sheets of paper on the desk in front of her. "I tell you," she said, "I wish I had your mind."

George laughed. "No," he said. "You don't."

The counselor seemed to consider this for a moment, her shoulders squaring off tensely. Then she relaxed and said, "Have you been thinking about what you might like to do for a living?"

"Yes," George said. "I think I might like to be a therapist."

Now Margaret is standing over him, asking, "What are you writing?"

"It keeps me calm." He hides the legal pad so that she can't see all the nonsense. "Listen," he says. He's staring at her now, as hard as he can. "This is very important. Will you go out with me?"

Margaret stiffens and says, "What have you brought?"

George gives her a cinnamon stick onto which he has glued cloves and peppercorns in order to create the appearance of a thickset dragon.

Margaret says, "After work." She fills his coffee cup and heads off toward the kitchen. She looks back only briefly, somehow intuiting that it's important to be specific. "Come here," she says, "and pick me up, *after* work."

- **If you usually attend activities outside the home with a friend or relative, would you still go if the friend or relative couldn't go?** *Is this a trick question?* **If no, please explain why not.** *If you attended an activity outside the home with 24 friends or relatives, and 6 friends couldn't go, but 3 friends each brought 4 friends of their own, how many people would be attending the activity, counting your friends, relatives, friends of friends, yourself, and your diagnosis?*

George returns to the offices just before ten o'clock. The garbage of Dale Pemberton, M.D., is always filled with the discarded packaging of free samples of various medications, sent to the doctor by pharmaceutical companies. George doesn't know whether the doctor is giving the pills to patients or taking them himself. George is a little concerned for Dale. Many of the medications have contraindications. He knows. He's been on half of them.

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- **Have you noticed any change in your condition since you started taking your medication?** *Yes. You change, you just do.*

In his apartment he collects the papers and bills and applications, the glass and soldiers and ball bearings, and throws them away, along with the homemade Ikea slingshot and his collection of tools bought at secondhand stores. He even discards his favorites—the four-foot monkey wrench and the corncob soldering iron.

George realizes that he hasn't received a phone call in several hours. He picks up the telephone. No dial tone. Such relief! That should've been the first bill he stopped paying.

- **What prescription medications have you taken in the past twelve months? List all.** *Ambien, Asendin, Ativan, Celexa, Effexor, lithium, Luvox, Norpramin, Parnate, Paxil, Restoril, Risperdal, Ritalin, Wellbutrin. The names: they're like poetry.*

Day five. When he meets Margaret, just past midnight, he's holding a rose—a real one, stolen from one of the public gardens in Ladd's Addition. Margaret takes it and smells it. She says, "I didn't think you would show up."

They walk together up Belmont. They pass George's truck, but he doesn't mention it. Neither of them seems to have much to say. They both like it that way. Yesterday George might've talked for hours on end, until his vocal cords were raw, until he was sick of himself and sick of her for being there to be talked to. Tonight he wants to walk and look at things and touch Margaret quietly under a tree. She's wearing a red blouse and a black skirt, and George loves the way her stockings shine in the streetlight, moving with the muscles of her legs. She smells faintly of coffee. Does he, George, smell of therapy?

They pass people's homes, and George stops several times to pick flowers from yards. He gives them to Margaret, and she holds them cupped in her hands. "Why do you call me Rosetta?" she asks.

"I don't know."

"You look far away," she says. "Like your brain's in orbit or something."

"Yeah," he says.

They cross the street and a car, speeding toward them, burns to a flamboyant stop. Margaret throws the flowers—including the original rose—into the air. George tries to catch some. The car honks its horn, and George trips over the curb. Margaret laughs.

"I should tell you," he says, after recomposing himself, "I'm on a lot of medication."

"I kind of figured."

They reach his apartment. "I could be dangerous."

"I kind of doubt it," she says. Margaret scans the walls and floors. She laughs again. She puts her hand behind George's neck and kisses him. Her lips taste like oranges.

"About the medication," he says. "It has side effects."

"Yeah?"

"But it's okay," he says. "I just stole a lot of Viagra from work."

Margaret smiles. Then she steps backward and slaps George lightly across the cheek. "First things first," she says. "We're going to go into your bathroom, you're going to get into the shower, and we're going to wash the funk off of you." He can't believe his luck.

Tomorrow everything will be different, of course. He'll wake when Margaret does; he'll fall back asleep when she leaves, lying there in bed all through her shift. Inside his skull his brain will feel as though it's floating in fluid, and it will seem to have drifted a little off center. He'll push his fists against his eyes, wondering if he can get at it through the sockets, put it back into place himself. The evening will pass this way into nighttime, and he'll be wondering when he started to head back south, and he'll also be wondering whether Margaret is ever coming back. And if she does—if she sits with him and tugs his hair, if she brings him dinner and eats with him, if she lies next to him in his bed and puts her arms around him for another long round of sleep—then he'll know, truly know, that something is wrong with her.

Nathan Roberts is a freelance writer who lives in Philadelphia.

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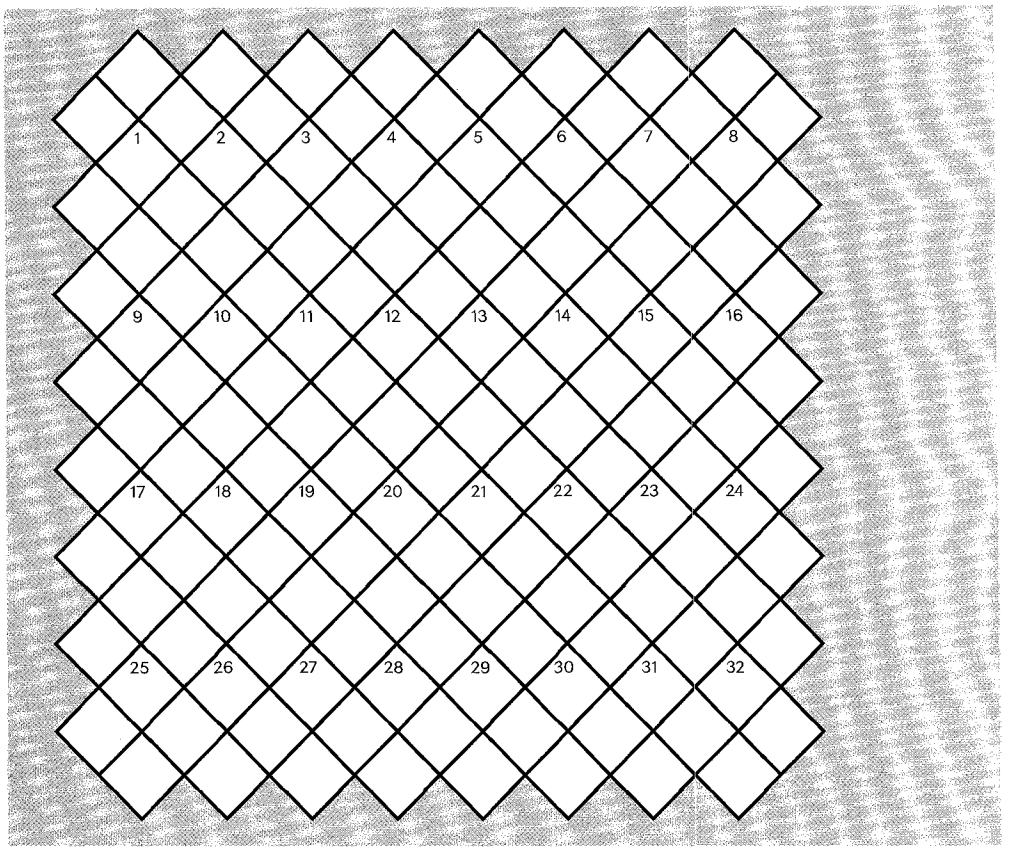
THE PUZZLER

by EMILY COX *and* HENRY RATHVON

Eights

Each of this puzzle's clues yields an eight-letter answer to be entered in the grid so as to trace a normal (vertical) figure eight. An entry may proceed in any direction from its starting point in the appropriately numbered square, crossing itself at the fifth letter—which is, therefore, the same as the first. Letters in the grid's eight unchecked corner squares, reading clockwise, will show one way to form a figure eight. Answers include one capitalized word.

Last month's Puzzler solution is on page 202.



CLUES

1. Start of *Torn Curtain* breaking quiet
2. Sort of mask and cuff Ella designed (*hyphenated*)
3. Revealing true drink after good shot?
4. Masculine, in the manner of silent dog
5. Doubt oar could be what moves a boat
6. Confederate understood about Yankee's first sandwich choice (*two words*)
7. Split beam around western watercourse
8. Scores left in stalemates
9. Last of oat crumbs for some horses
10. Gradually fills INS farms
11. Baby food improperly containing popular analgesic (*two words*)
12. Fantastic sum a mint makes free
13. Westbound, choose among cashiers in remote stations
14. Eating vegetables, monkey died satisfied
15. Traffic hazard and a bummer, running into deer (*two words*)
16. Company kept by Alice's crazy, variegated cats
17. Don't allow eccentric keeping above-average financial record
18. Shut down, losing Liberal is unable to function
19. Increase number included in layer
20. Label wrapping in metal "polluting"
21. Tick Babe off with slander
22. Passing boat stuck in grass, moved the car
23. Trek in part beside mountain, and notice tablet (*two words*)
24. Meagerly small garnish, with a slight twist?
25. Not mentioning nail found in shelter (*two words*)
26. Horse's original new harness gets unpleasant
27. Changing the lists nettles
28. Sewed up old hat with name inside
29. Lack of flexibility in the morning evident in a series of steps
30. Irregular chunk of coral invested in for one thousand (*hyphenated*)
31. A word contributed to flood reduction
32. A green also known as "tamarin's tail" in Amazonian language

Note: *The instructions above are for this month's puzzle only. It is assumed that you know how to decipher clues. For a complete introduction to clue-solving visit www.theatlantic.com/issues/puzzclue.htm or send an addressed, stamped long envelope to The Atlantic Puzzler, 77 North Washington Street, Boston, Mass. 02114.*

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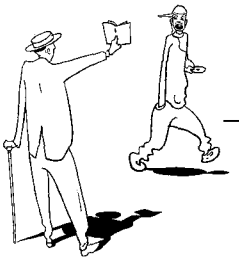


Word Court

by Barbara Wallraff

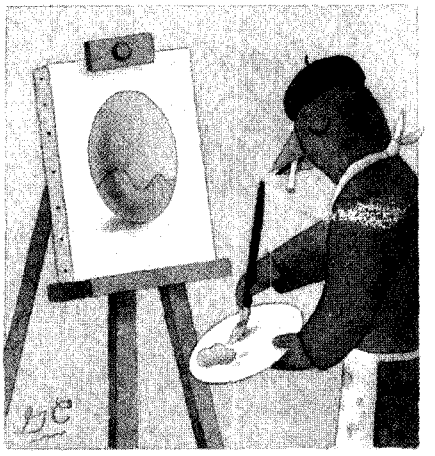
William Peak, of Easton, Maryland, writes, "Does the term *robin's-egg blue* have the same meaning in England as it does in the United States? Old World robins are an entirely different species from our own; and their eggs, at least as illustrated in J. Felix's *Oiseaux des pays d'Europe*, appear to be an undistinguished brown. Yet the other day I heard a ceramics expert on the British version of *Antiques Roadshow* say '*robin's-egg blue*' in describing a piece of pottery. Have the British adopted what must seem to them an illogical Americanism, or are the French colorblind?"

You're right that the European robin, *Erithacus rubecula*, isn't the same as our robin, *Turdus migratorius*, otherwise known as the red-breasted thrush. Evidently, because both birds have a red breast, colonists who came from Great Britain applied the old, nostalgic name to the bird in the New World. Other bright-breasted birds, too, in such former British colonies as Australia, New Zealand, India, and Jamaica, are called robins locally—or blue robins, yellow robins, and so forth.

You're also right that *robin's-egg blue* refers to the color of the American robin's eggshells. The *Oxford English Dictionary* and *Webster's New World Dictionary* each note that *robin's-egg blue* is an Americanism. No doubt British birders are aware that the term doesn't pertain to their local robins, but whether ceramics experts spend enough time outdoors to know this surely varies from expert to expert. The term does occasionally turn up in the British media (for instance, here's a snippet from an article about makeup that appeared in the *Birmingham Evening Mail* last spring: "And colour is back. Glorious, vibrant, and dare I say 'girlie' colour. Pink, turquoise, violet, and *robin's egg blue*. Lagoon teal, apple green, and even yellow"). Nonetheless, on the evidence of the media database I use, *robin's-egg blue* is much, much more frequently seen and heard in the United States.

Eric Focht, of Herndon, Virginia, writes, "I definitely do not claim to be an authority on grammar, but I can find no support for using *disrespect* as a verb. I often hear people, even folks in the media, say things such as 'He *disrespected* her.' Its use is becoming more prevalent, and I am beyond being annoyed."

I wonder if you also dislike *dis*, which is an informal or slang shortening of *disrespect*, and this has turned you against the latter verb. Although *The New Oxford American Dictionary* calls both the verb *disrespect* and *dis* "informal," none of the entries for *disrespect* in six other major



contemporary American dictionaries so much as hints that the verb is anything less than standard. *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate*, which gives the date of the earliest citation it has for most words, traces the verb *disrespect* back to 1614—seventeen years before its earliest citation for the noun. Does this antiquity change your opinion?

Scott Smith, of Eden Prairie, Minnesota, writes, "My brother and I are having a dispute about *ice cream*. I contend it is two words. It is listed that way in the dictionary, and if you were playing Scrabble, it would be challenged and you would be forced to take it from the board (or so says my Scrabble dictionary). My brother contends that it is one word, and if you were diagramming a sentence, *ice cream* would 'hold the place of' one word, not two. Your input on this would be appreciated."

It's true that the rules printed on the Scrabble box say, "Before the game begins, players should agree which dictionary they will use, in case of a challenge. All words labeled as a part of speech ... are permitted with the exception of the following: words always capitalized, abbreviations, prefixes and suffixes standing alone, words requiring a hyphen or an apostrophe."

It's also true that all the major contemporary American dictionaries (except Scrabble dictionaries) have entries for *ice cream*, and these give "noun" as its part of speech. But is it a word? In defining *word*, the *Random House Webster's Unabridged Dictionary* says, "Words are usually separated by spaces in writing," and other dictionaries echo that idea.

Do linguists—scientists of words—agree? In fact they don't tend to use *word* to mean anything very precise, instead discussing the likes of *morphemes* and *listemes* and *syntactic atoms*. In the glossary of his book *The Language Instinct*, Steven Pinker explains this last term as "one of the senses of 'word,' defined as an entity that the rules of syntax cannot separate or rearrange." That seems to be the sense of *word* that your brother has in mind. He's right that *ice cream* is a word for some purposes. And you are right that it is not a word for Scrabble's purposes—though *amerce*, *macer*, and *racemic* (each of which uses only letters from *ice cream*) all pass muster. Go figure.

Do you have a language question or dispute? Write to Word Court in care of The Atlantic Monthly, *77 North Washington Street, Boston, MA 02114, or send e-mail to msgrammar@theatlantic.com. All letters become the property of Word Court. Ms. Grammar is also on the Web, at www.theatlantic.com/courtrecord.*

GREG CLARKE

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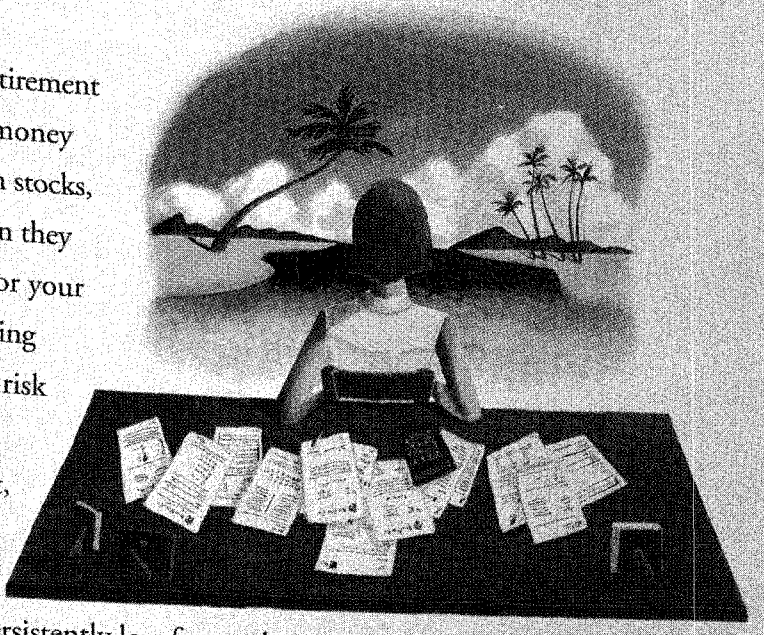

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